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HORACE VERNON ;

OR,

Life in the West.

“ Were we to take as much pains to *be* what we ought, as we do to disguise what we *are*, we might appear like ourselves, without being at the trouble of any disguise at all.”—ROCHEFOUCAULT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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HORACE VERNON.

CHAPTER I.

“ To doubt ’s an injury; to suspect a friend
Is breach of friendship.”

IT is the common misfortune of those who endeavour to pourtray the strange shiftings and ever-varying undulations of an inconsistent character, that they themselves become obnoxious to the charge of inconsistency. There is indeed, in our modern days, so strong a bias in favour of what is called consistency of character, that they who strive to present a faithful transcript of nature are too frequently accused of distorting and belying her. But as, in these volumes, we profess to furnish a true History,

not to tender a mere fable—since we have only common flesh and blood to offer, and not those wax-work representations which wig-makers delight to honour, and which some of our present writers aspire to imitate—we hope we shall be excused if we proceed to draw our portraits from the life. They are not represented as they ought to be, but as they are; and there is no “faultless monster” in *our* history.

It might be supposed that Vernon, having succeeded in averting the progress of circumstances which threatened to overwhelm him, would have acquired a fresh accession of spirits. Fortune also, which had been uncommonly kind to him at the gaming table, might naturally be imagined to encourage a belief of her returning devotion to him. But as we have shown, Vernon was not disposed to draw any consolatory conclusions from these facts. At an earlier period of his life, they would have sufficed to fortify him in the conviction that

Fate never intended he should be amenable to the ordinary mischances of life. At that time, sufficient for the day was the evil thereof. But now, when the storm was lowering above his head, when the gloom was thickening around him, these were but as flashes which only contributed to discover the utter darkness that beset him. He arose therefore, sleepless and unrefreshed, from his pillow, and descended to the breakfast parlour, in a state of mind which the mental torture of the preceding night had in no slight degree aggravated.

Vernon had of late felt a certain restraint in the company of his family, and was relieved at finding that his elder sister alone was present. He could much easier endure the calm placidity of Miss Vernon, than the soft and gentle expression, and the pleading eyes, that seemed unintentionally to reproach him, of Charlotte. He however inquired about her, and was informed that she was unwell, and confined to her chamber.

“She appears to dwell too constantly upon our recent loss,” remarked Vernon.

“I do not wonder at it,” answered his sister; “she was, you know, our mother’s favourite; and once,” she added after a pause,—“she was yours, Horace; but now”—

“I have given her no cause to suspect that she is otherwise,” said Vernon, hastily; “I hope not.”

A long silence ensued, during which the eyes of Miss Vernon rested unconsciously upon her brother. She perceived, at length, that he was disconcerted by the earnestness of her gaze, and as she withdrew her eyes, she sighed.

“Why, Mary,” said Vernon, looking up, “a sigh from you is rather an unusual event—I think we may call it so”—

“I do not often sigh,” answered Miss Vernon; “but I feel, nevertheless. They suffer most, Horace, who never sigh.”

“What do you mean?” inquired Vernon, with interest.

“The loss we have recently sustained is past,” answered his sister, “and it is our duty to be resigned. But I confess my sister is a cause of much anxiety to me at the present moment.”

“I do not understand you—pray be explicit with me.”

“I will be so,” said Miss Vernon; “I have decided upon speaking to you for some days; and I am glad this opportunity has presented itself. We are very much astonished and grieved, Horace, at the extraordinary change in your manners and conduct towards Captain Laurence.”

“Indeed! I am not aware that I had exhibited any want of proper respect or attention to that gentleman,” said Vernon coldly.

“The very words you now utter, and the manner in which you have spoken them,” returned his sister, “convince me that you have conceived some prejudice against him.”

“Not at all,” said Vernon, “not at all; but

pray allow me to inquire, whom did you mean when you said *we* ?”

“Charlotte and myself, and I may add, Laurence also, who has mentioned it more than once, and who is very much concerned at your apparent coldness.”

“I am very much obliged to him for his concern,” said Vernon, with a contemptuous smile ; “and for the interest he appears to have acquired in my house. And so he makes you his confidant, I suppose—he presumes to complain of me to my sisters, and obtains willing listeners ?”

Miss Vernon was mortified ; but the shade, that had for a moment clouded her brow, vanished.

“I should be offended with you, Horace,” she said calmly, “but that I know you so well, and the strange weakness which possesses you, and which, only because I do not understand it, I pity. You know that Charlotte has accepted his hand ; you know that it was our

mother's express will that they should be united ; and until I have some reason to alter my opinion of him, I must and I will insist, that the contract shall be fulfilled."

" You speak peremptorily, madam," said Vernon, slightly colouring ; " what if I say, it shall not ?"

" Horace Vernon," said his sister ; " I am surprised at this strange conduct, which to me is inexplicable. You do not know the misery you are about to bring upon your family. Is the happiness of your sister of no weight ? or do you consider it a trivial thing to render her miserable for life ?"

" It is because I do not wish to render her so," returned Vernon ; " that I am opposed to the match."

" You *are* then opposed to the match ?" repeated his sister in surprise,— " let us at least hear your reason for being so."

" I do not like the man," said Vernon doggedly.

“ Why not ? ”

“ I have many reasons,” returned the banker, in the tone of one who, whatever reasons he may entertain, for or against any thing, is not disposed at the moment to state them.

“ I perceive it is useless to argue with you,” said Miss Vernon, and she arose. “ It will ever be my duty, Horace, to see the last wishes of my mother fulfilled ; and though you interpose your authority, I shall endeavour to prevail upon my sister to disregard an opposition which, it is plain, is the result of a most unfounded and ungenerous prejudice.”

Miss Vernon was about to leave the room, when Vernon stepped between her and the door. He took her by the hand.

“ My dear Mary,” said he, “ why this precipitation ? What have I done to justify so sudden a step as the one you threaten ? Sit down, I beseech you.”

“ If you knew, Horace,” said his sister, reseating herself, “ how you distress me by your

causeless distrust of Captain Laurence, I am sure you would endeavour to remove it from your breast. I am really alarmed for Charlotte. The loss of her mother has severely affected her health, which has ever been delicate ; and the fear which she has had too much cause to entertain, that you are averse to her union with Captain Laurence, so preys upon her feelings, that I dread the consequences."

Vernon was silent ; he was grieved, and almost ashamed of his suspicions of Laurence ; for which he could not but be sensible that he had no just or sufficient grounds. But although he loved his younger sister with as much affection as it is usual for a brother to feel, yet, if the truth must be told, he loved his own will, and the arbitrary indulgence of it, much better, and with more sincerity, than any other thing or person in the world.

"I have not," said he at length, "observed the change in Charlotte which you appear to imagine ; for I think it a mere fancy. You

will do me the justice to believe, Mary, that I would do any thing in my power to secure her happiness."

"I do believe it," said his sister. "Why then thwart the happiness of one you love? You form an unfortunate opinion of an honourable and worthy man; without, as it seems to me, the slightest reason for so doing."

"The truth is," said Vernon, "I believe him to be a mere fortune-hunter, a mercenary adventurer, and I do not wish to see my sister the victim or the sacrifice to his artifices."

"You did not think this at first."

"True."

"Then what recent cause have you for suspecting it?"

"He waited upon me abruptly yesterday morning," said Vernon, evading the question, "at a time, of all others, when I was least prepared to enter upon the subject. He spoke of the possibility of his regiment being ordered abroad;—pshaw! and I could see in his man-

ner a strong desire to learn how much he was likely to get, if he took my sister off my hands. I should not have much wondered had he put the case upon that footing, and in those very words."

"You wrong him, Vernon; shamefully wrong him;—upon my life, you do," said Miss Vernon, with warmth; "you degrade yourself by such base suspicions; for they are base."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," interrupted Vernon; "you take a friendly interest in his welfare, I perceive. I wrong him, no doubt. If I do, Mary, I am sorry for it. You women," he added with bitterness, "are proverbial for your insight into the characters of men. We, of the weaker sex, are blind; we cannot see each other; we have no judgment in these matters."

"I am sure you are grossly deceiving yourself in this instance," said Miss Vernon.

"Well, then," resumed her brother, "what will you think of this man, when I tell you, that in spite of the possibility of his being ordered

abroad, he was heard to express a wish to purchase this house? what cause had he to suspect that I intended to part with it? but the purchase money was to be paid out of Charlotte's dowry, I presume."

"Who told you that he had expressed such wish?" inquired Miss Vernon.

"Robinson, who called here yesterday, and to whom he communicated his desire to become owner of the place."

"Mr. Robinson was here yesterday, certainly," said Miss Vernon; "and I dare say, in the course of conversation, the Captain may have spoken slightly respecting such a contingency; indeed, he has often said the same thing to me, for he is very partial to the situation. But what of this? It is just what any person might unthinkingly say. I hope Mr. Robinson has not so reported his words, as to cause you to mistake the real construction that should be put upon them."

"Oh no; Robinson is a worthy fellow—a

very worthy fellow," said Vernon ; " but no more of this at present. I will endeavour to arrive at a just opinion of Laurence ; but if I do not find him worthy of Charlotte, I assure you I shall withhold my consent."

" Nor should he marry her with mine," said Miss Vernon, " if I believed him unworthy of her. I am glad to hear you say what you have just now spoken, and I hope you will discard all prejudice. An hour's conversation with him would, I am sure, remove it."

" Well, let us drop the subject for the present," said Vernon. " Here," and he took out his pocket-book ; " here are ten thousand pounds, which I shall give you to keep for me. It is the repayment of a debt by an old friend of mine, who I hope will shortly render me a still greater return."

Miss Vernon received the notes. " I will promise to keep them safely for you," she said ; " but I fear I cannot afford you any interest for your money," she added with a smile.

“Never mind that—it will be safe with you at all events. I must go to town to-day. We are rather busy in the City just now. Tell Charlotte to keep up her spirits, for I expect her to be quite recovered when I return this evening.”

And Vernon mounted his horse, and rode with all speed to the banking-house, at which place he intended for the future regularly to show himself, until he could bring matters round once more.

CHAPTER II.

“ Fair-faced deceit, whose wily conscious eye
Ne'er looks direct. The tongue that licks the dust
But, when it safely dares, as prompt to sting.”

IT was about eight o'clock in the evening, when Mr. Robinson, having carefully descended the three crazy steps of the Egham stage, which seemed to have been contrived expressly with a view to the prostration of the inside passengers of that vehicle, paid his fare with much ostentatious delay, and leisurely directed his steps towards the house of Mrs. Maxwell. He found that lady in the drawing-room, and seemingly awaiting his arrival.

“ Well, madam,” said the solicitor, approaching her with romantic urbanity, “ I hope

the gentleman obeyed the summons which you did me the honour of making me the medium of conveying to him."

"Yes; he came, certainly," said Mrs. Maxwell, shrugging her shoulders, which Mr. Robinson, at that moment, thought he had never seen look so symmetrically rounded before; "he came, certainly, Robinson; but I fear, after all, we shall be able to make nothing of him."

"Indeed, that is awkward, madam," said Robinson, shaking his head; "but, remember, Mrs. Maxwell, this makes good what I told you a day or two since; I said that my putting in a restraint was the only means of working upon his feelings at the present moment; and I do think, if we shall at last succeed in our endeavours, one-third of the amount will not be too much for my exertions in the matter."

"You drive a hard bargain, Robinson. I think that is the phrase, is it not?" answered the lady. "But, however, if you can bring the

man to his senses, we shall not quarrel about terms. For my part, I don't know what is come to the man, of late ; he is strangely altered."

"Why, my dear madam," said the solicitor, "your friend Lord Walgrave tickled him—made him dance, I may say, to a very serious tune ; and between us, what with his continued gaming losses for so long a period, and other matters, I fear, when you have got this two thousand pounds, should you be fortunate enough to succeed, you may take your leave of Mr. Vernon for ever."

"How so? what's the matter, then?" said Mrs. Maxwell, with anxiety ; "any thing wrong besides what I know?"

"My dear madam, my dear madam," said Robinson, with an air of importance, placing his fore-finger to the side of his nose, "not *any thing* wrong, but *all* wrong, *all* wrong."

"Good heavens ! Robinson, I am very sorry to hear this."

"Yes, yes," said the solicitor with emphasis ;

“it is a hard case—a very lamentable circumstance, when a gentleman like Mr. Vernon goes to the dogs, as he is now certain of doing. I know all his affairs, madam, and I am sure it distresses me very much, to know that I can be of no service to him—none whatever. I participate in your sorrow, Mrs. Maxwell; I am really grieved.”

Here Robinson moaned with great perseverance, and raised his handkerchief to his eyes.

“I did not mean that,” said Mrs. Maxwell, testily; “of course I am sorry for the poor man—its only natural that I should be; but the question is, what is to become of me? what am *I* to do, Mr. Robinson?”

“The Lord alone knows,” answered the solicitor, swaying his head to and fro.

“Now you mischievous, quizzing creature, you,” said Mrs. Maxwell, suddenly casting an arch glance at the solicitor, who, of whatever other faults he might have been convicted, was certainly not prone to mischief in sport,

or, in fact, of quizzing at any time; “you know you have been deceiving me all this while; Vernon is not so far gone as you represent.”

“I wish I could assure you he was not,” said Robinson; and Mrs. Maxwell could see at once, by the expression of his face, that he was, in this instance, stating the truth. “He is fast going, madam; and nothing, I fear, can save him at this crisis.”

“Robinson, I am disgusted with you,” said Mrs. Maxwell, deeply offended; “I thought you had more respect, more friendship for me, than to have permitted me to remain in ignorance of Mr. Vernon’s affairs, until it is too late to obtain what, in justice to myself, I ought to have made a point of receiving:—I have done with you, after this, sir.”

“Done with me, madam? very well, madam,” said Robinson in a huff, and he arose from his seat; “and although you have done with me, I may find some one else to begin with.

You are an ungrateful woman, Mrs. Maxwell—very ungrateful. It is not proper to behave thus to me: I knew nothing of the precise situation of Vernon till within a day or two; and it will be a miracle if I do not get into a scrape in consequence of my ignorance. Nobody knew, till yesterday, when there was a run upon the house; and I, madam, have discounted bills for him to a large amount, and I shall be left in the lurch—in the lurch, Mrs. Maxwell.”

Robinson, at the conclusion of this speech, sank, panting for want of breath, into his chair, and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, languidly.

“ Well, well, I suppose I must forgive you,” said Mrs. Maxwell, apparently appeased, and really alarmed; for, through Robinson’s professional dexterity, and legal acumen, Mrs. Maxwell had derived, in many ways, various advantages, and expected to derive many more. “ You have been a good friend to me, Robinson,

many times, and I know you to be an honest man."

"You did not say so once," said Robinson, who was sometimes slow to forgive, when the offending party showed any expressions of penitence; "you did not think so in the Earl of Charleston's time, Mrs. Maxwell."

"I was wrong then," said the lady coaxingly, and she laid her hand with friendly familiarity on the shoulder of the solicitor; "but I know you better now. Come, Robinson, I must confess you have been a "serviceable monster" to me,—haven't you now? Come, say you forgive me."

This was said with so enchanting a softness, that Mr. Robinson could do no less, as a man of sentiment, than accept a renewal of friendship so delightfully proffered. He gazed upwards with a benevolent smile, such as old philanthropists bestow upon the object of their affection, and said, as he shook his head with wicked pleasantry :—

“ You know I have been the best friend you ever had in the world—the most constant ; and I don’t regret it ; for I feel a real, a true affection for you, Maria.”

Mrs. Maxwell averted her face for a moment, to conceal the smile, half ridicule, half contempt, which the solicitor had succeeded in conjuring up ; but matters of mighty import soon recalled her to a more serious state of feeling.

“ Well, but, my good friend, what is to be done with this man ?” she inquired with great anxiety ; “ do you think he will keep his word with me ? he promised to see me this evening.”

“ *You* know best, madam, what dependence is to be placed upon Mr. Vernon’s word,” answered Robinson, whose fit of sentimental tenderness was but of short duration ; “ I think myself, you may expect him.”

“ If I could only manage to get this money from him, I should be happy ; for indeed, Robinson, I was getting sadly tired of him ;

he is too hasty and capricious, and requires too much trouble to manage ; I think I shall, in future, attach myself to Lord Walgrave."

"There you are right, Mrs. Maxwell," said Robinson with emphasis ; "there I applaud your taste and discrimination ; he is really a very promising young nobleman—a man from whom great things may be expected."

"And I think my expectations from that quarter will not be disappointed, Robinson ; I shall, I dare say, require your assistance from time to time ; for he has not always ready money at command, you know."

"Always happy to be employed," said Robinson, rubbing his hands ; "and so Vernon is to go to the wall, is he ?"

"There is no alternative," said the lady ; "he is drawn dry, it appears ; nothing more to be had there."

"No more than Paddy shot at, as I was accustomed to say, when a youth," said Mr. Robinson.

“And what was that?” inquired Mrs. Maxwell, with simplicity.

“Nothing,” said the solicitor; and the two companions burst into a fit of pleasant laughter.

It was at this moment, and unobserved by either of the exhilarated parties, that Vernon entered the room.

“I hope I may congratulate Mrs. Maxwell, on the withdrawal of her perplexities,” said the banker advancing; “the mirth in which I find our friend Robinson and yourself indulging, intimates nothing less.”

“Indeed, no,” returned Mrs. Maxwell, with admirable presence of mind; “Robinson had been assuring me that I might depend upon you; and I was certain that you would not permit me, for so paltry a sum, to be molested by so unpleasant an annoyance; in the meanwhile, Mr. Robinson was relating a laughable anecdote.”

“A strange adventure that befel me in my youth,” interfered the solicitor; who by this

time had recovered the first shock of the banker's sudden appearance ; " a trivial circumstance which, I am happy to say, banished for awhile the wretched spirits in which I found Mrs. Maxwell, when I entered."

" You are as good as a physician in these cases, Robinson," said the banker, taking a chair ; " but may I not also hear this strange adventure of yours ; I am sure if it can raise a smile, it will not come at an inopportune period to me ; for my spirits aren't one of the best, I assure you."

" Are they not indeed ?" exclaimed Mrs. Maxwell with tender solicitude ; " you keep yourself too much within doors, I fear, Mr. Vernon."

" The story is not worth relating," cried Robinson, who, during the short reprieve for which he was indebted to Mrs. Maxwell, had been tasking his memory, and racking his invention, to very little purpose ; " the merest trifle, I give you my word. But, my dear sir,

to advert to business, what can be done for this poor lady? she is very awkwardly circumstanced. Believe me, I have done every thing I can for her, during the day, but to no purpose; the adverse party is inflexible."

Vernon pondered for some minutes. "This is a distressing circumstance, Maria," he said, at length, "and the more so to me, since I really have it not in my power to be of the least service to you at present."

"Oh! do not say so, Vernon, for Heaven's sake, do not say so!" cried Mrs. Maxwell, wringing her hands. "What will become of me, if this affair should transpire. Oh! for this once—for the last time do oblige me, Horace—I know, I am sure you will."

"Compose yourself, my dear good lady," exclaimed Robinson, with strong symptoms of sympathy; "you see, sir," he added, turning to the banker, "how these little inconvenient disarrangements of domestic economy distress the ladies, unused as they are to legal proceed-

ings. Come, my dear Mr. Vernon, what do you say? you will be adding another, to your many noble actions."

"My good fellow, what *can* I say," expostulated Vernon; "I would do it, were it in my power, but it is not, I give you my word of honour."

"That we must all believe," said Robinson with a bow; "but surely, sir, you misapprehend the amount—£2000—"

"I cannot do it—I can't spare the money," said Vernon decisively.

"Now, my dear madam," remonstrated the solicitor, approaching Mrs. Maxwell, who had sunk upon the sofa, and had buried her head in one of the cushions, in an agony of grief, "you must calm this perturbation—you must, indeed. Suffer me to speak calmly with your friend Mr. Vernon, on this business."

"Well, sir," he resumed, again addressing himself to the banker, "I was about to say—"

"Nothing," interrupted Vernon, "which it

can be of any service to Mrs. Maxwell or to myself that I should hear. I repeat, that I cannot spare the money at this moment."

"I have done," cried the solicitor, bowing very humbly; "I will say no more. Mr. Vernon can do nothing for you, madam," he adding, sighing, as he turned once again towards the lady, "I am sorry—very sorry for it.—The thing must take its course."

Here a fresh burst of sobs proceeded from Mrs. Maxwell, whilst Mr. Robinson silently appealed, by sundry woe-begone shakes of the head and melancholy shrugs, to the banker.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Robinson at length, with a pat on the thigh: "you say, my good sir, you cannot conveniently spare the money just now—I myself will advance it."

"You good, generous man!" cried Mrs. Maxwell in a broken voice.

"I am not a monied man," resumed Robinson; "far from it; but I will distress myself to be of service to the lady at this moment. She

must not be left at the mercy of such wretches as those into whose hands she has fallen—and——”

“ Very honourable—very friendly !” cried Vernon.

“ And,” proceeded the solicitor, with a slight hesitation, “ I will take your note-of-hand, at three months, for the amount.”

Mrs. Maxwell gazed with an intensely imploring earnestness at the banker during the silence which ensued.

“ Well,” said Vernon, drumming with his fingers upon the table ; “ I did not expect such a conclusion to your speech, Robinson ; however, you will trust me——”

“ Any time, my dear sir, will do for the note-of-hand—a mere memorandum to that effect will suffice now.”

“ Well, well—hand me the pen and ink.”

Mr. Robinson was ready at a moment. It was by chance that Vernon directed his eye towards Mrs. Maxwell, and thence rapidly at the

face of the solicitor. A whole volume of iniquity was revealed to him in that instant ; and yet, when he again surveyed the parties, an expression appropriate to the occasion pervaded the countenance of each. He threw down the pen.

“ I will not give you this memorandum, Robinson,” said he, and he arose suddenly. “ I have thought better of it ;—I will never again permit myself to be made the fool I have been.”

“ You are a villain, Vernon !” cried Mrs. Maxwell, enraged beyond the bounds of discretion ; “ I always thought so ;—I never believed you my friend.”

“ It is a pity, madam,” said Vernon, calmly, “ that you accepted favours at my hands which led me to believe you had a better opinion of me.”

“ Hush !—for heaven’s sake, hush !” cried Robinson, in an apparent agony of distress. “ Mrs. Maxwell knows not what she says. Be calm, I implore you, madam.” And he added,

in a lower tone, “What a fool you are, to expose yourself thus!—beg his pardon.—Stay, Mr. Vernon—stay, for goodness’ sake!”

“When we meet in future,” said Vernon, “I hope, Maria, we shall meet as friends. It is probable we shall seldom meet again. Good night, madam. Robinson, good night.” And the banker hastily withdrew; leaving the worthy couple to a scene of crimination and recrimination, easier to be ‘conceived than described,’ and not easily to be done in any way.

CHAPTER III.

————— “ Dream after dream ensues,
And still they dream that they shall still succeed,
And still are disappointed.”

THE constant attendance of Vernon at the banking-house was calculated to allay the feeling of despondency and alarm which alternately beset him. He could not fail to perceive, since the interview with Warkworth, that his partner had adopted suspicions of him, for which every succeeding day supplied him with additional materials. Warkworth was naturally a nervous and even a timid man ; but the first law of nature was strongly impressed upon him ; and the instinct of self-preservation taught him that his connexion with Vernon, if of much longer con-

tinuance, would probably operate to the ruin of both. He was, at the same time, strengthened by the advice of gentlemen of the highest respectability in the mercantile world, who insisted, as a *sine quâ non* of their future transactions with him, that he should embrace the earliest opportunity of shaking off his partner.

It must be said, in justice to Warkworth, that the necessity he felt in resorting to so extreme a measure was most painful to him. He had been on the most intimate and friendly terms with Vernon's father ; they had for many years conducted a prosperous business together ; and Warkworth was not insensible of the great advantage he had derived from the knowledge of business and mercantile acuteness of the son. He was, at the same time, by no means a person who delighted to wound unnecessarily the feelings of any human being. But whilst he looked with almost trembling commiseration upon the impending fate of Vernon, it may readily be believed that his manner to-

wards him assumed, insensibly, a restraint,—not to say a coldness,—which Vernon, in his then state of mind, was too ready to ascribe to selfish, if not to vindictive feeling.

His sisters, during the last two months, had been residing at Brighton ; to which place the physicians had ordered the younger, the state of whose health for some time past had been a source of great anxiety to Miss Vernon. The banker was not unwilling to be left entirely to himself during this crisis of his fortune ; and when he did even dare to see them for a day, which was but seldom, there was a moody restlessness in his manner, which, although he was sensible of it, he could not discard, and which made him too happy (if there was any happiness in the case) to return to his own house. He saw Laurence, also, several times during this period. His dislike, too, of the captain, which in the first instance had been a mere pretext to himself, to conceal the real cause of his opposition to the marriage—which cause was fear

lest the state of his affairs should be discovered, —that dislike, so fondly indulged, had now increased to positive and perfect hatred. He felt assured that, now, the marriage could never take place ; he knew that he had put it out of his power to fulfil the dying command of his mother, and that his sisters in a short time would be reduced to a state of comparative beggary. And then he thought he knew Laurence too well to believe that he would be disposed to accept his sister's hand, under the altered circumstances of the family. He construed, with morbid eagerness, the importunate solicitations of Laurence, into a greedy impatience to possess himself of his sister's supposed fortune ; and he hated him for it with an intensity which amounted to loathing.

One circumstance was by no means the least of his perplexities—namely, the debt he had contracted with Mrs. Livingstone. He had latterly received several letters from that lady, requesting the immediate return of her money ;

and they were couched in terms most of all repulsive to a man of ordinary feeling—consisting, as they did, of appeals to his honour—to his generosity—to his sense of justice. They also set forth the distress, the misery, the distraction, to which herself and her family would be reduced, by his non-fulfilment of his promise to repay the principal within the time specified. Livingstone, too, had waited upon him with obstinate and untiring pertinacity ; and the half servile, half insolent tone of this gentleman, whilst it disconcerted, almost provoked him frequently to kick the persevering applicant out of the house.

There is no state of mental distress, to which a man may be reduced, which comparative trifles will not sensibly increase. It is then, indeed, that we most of all suffer from these trivial annoyances. The conduct of Mr. Robinson had undergone a great, a sensible change. His manner was much altered ; his former subservient humility had given place to a cold self-possessed formality,

which sometimes barely kept within the bounds of common politeness. Whenever Vernon called upon him on business, he received him with the distant air of one who has begun to suspect that in a very short time a vast difference will be observable between himself and the other,—a sort of gulph, as it were, in which all human feeling is forthwith to be buried. Upon one or two occasions, the formerly obsequious solicitor had gone so far as to instruct Mr. Jeffries, to inform Mr. Vernon that he could not be seen at present, and that he must call when Mr. Robinson was more at leisure; a behest which Mr. John Jeffries obeyed with a zest, indicating his perfect sympathy with the spirit in which it was put forth. And now for the first time in his life, or if not for the first, for the only time in which he had been *made* to experience the miserable truth, Vernon began to feel the almost intolerable insults which ever attend a sinking man. The claims of gratitude for-

gotten—the ties of old and once-valued friendship suddenly snapped asunder—the usages of common civility disregarded;—these are the inevitable consequences attendant upon a rich man's downfall. But there is nothing new to be said upon this subject. Poets have sung—prose writers have prosed—moralists have preached, a warning never yet heeded, a lesson too often learned, but always learned too late.

To describe the torture, the anguish, the desperation of Vernon during the fortnight preceding the day on which Hopwood's bills fell due—that were impossible. Sometimes, when he had succeeded in enforcing a temporary calmness upon himself, he endeavoured to call to mind some practicable means of raising the money to renew the bills, if only for a month or two, until he could contrive to bring his available assets into a focus. But, alas! he had deceived himself too often before—he had too frequently put his trust in contingencies which perpetually betrayed him; and the fear

was, that in this last instance, he might plunge another into ruin. No, he felt that he had no further resources—that his time was come—that his last bolt was shot, and that he must bear the issue as became him.

Vernon was one of those men who never bestir themselves till the last moment; and who, accordingly, do not give their chances fair play against fortune. Even in this case his fatal infirmity had possessed him; and it was not until it was too late to take any effectual measures, that he was reminded of the absolute necessity of adopting them. What if he were to apply to Hopwood, and get him to hold over the bills for a short time? But the tumult of anxiety under which he had been suffering for some days past, had completely unnerved him. He had walked half way up the gravel path leading to Hopwood's door, when his courage forsook him. What would Hopwood suspect, and justly? He would compromise the honour and character of the house, by requiring an ac-

commodation for so paltry a sum as the amount of the bills held by that gentleman. Or perhaps Hopwood would discover that he had accepted the bills without the cognizance of his partners, and his reputation would be lost for ever. He retreated hastily from the house, congratulating himself upon his foresight in perceiving those probabilities. He hastened to town, deciding to call upon Robinson, who perhaps might be able to serve him in this emergency. Under circumstances like these, if a man has any pride left, it is not obtrusively prominent ; and Vernon was not disposed at that moment to reflect upon the slights he had recently borne at the hands of the solicitor. He found Mr. Robinson at home, and entered his office without ceremony.

“ Well, Mr. Vernon, and what is *your* pleasure ? ” demanded the solicitor, gravely.

“ Those bills of Hopwood’s, Robinson, fall due to-morrow.”

“ They do so,” said the other ; “ and I was

this moment writing a note, which I intended to have sent to your banking-house by the hands of Mr. Jeffries, to apprise you of that circumstance, fearing you might have forgotten it."

"I never forget matters relating to business," said Vernon.

"I am glad of it, sir," answered Robinson; "you will pardon me, but I have been in a state of considerable alarm respecting those bills. Will they be taken up?"

"What reason have you to doubt it?" said Vernon; and his voice trembled as he spoke.

"None at all, my dear sir," said Robinson, with something of his old manner; "but I really should get into such disgrace with my friend, Mr. Hopwood, were any thing to turn out wrong, that I may be excused for my anxiety, which I think is natural enough."

"It is time, sir, to express it when you *see* any thing wrong," said Vernon, sternly; "the bills *will* be taken up."

“ I am really ashamed, my dear sir,” said the solicitor, with quite his old manner, for he began half to hope, and half to fear, that matters were not so bad with the banker as he had for some time past surmised. “ I am really ashamed to have doubted it for a moment. But will you permit me to inquire, whether they are to be presented at the banking-house ? I can easily send word to my friend to present them here, if you prefer it.”

Vernon hesitated. He had called upon Robinson, with the express intention of raising as much money upon his estate at Egham as would suffice to take up the bills ; but now that he saw Robinson before him—now that he felt how completely he should place himself in the power of the solicitor—he could not bring himself to the degradation of requesting any accommodation from him. Robinson perceived his perplexity, and was not far from divining the cause of it.

“ You did not hear me, I presume, Mr. Vernon ?” said Robinson.

“ Oh, yes, yes, I beg pardon ; I was thinking of something else. Presented here ? Oh, no, by no means, that is not necessary—they have advice of them in Lombard-street. I merely called in passing. You remember what I spoke to you about some time ago, respecting my place at Egham. Will you look out for a purchaser ?”

“ With great pleasure,” said the solicitor, perfectly astounded at the *nonchalance* exhibited by a man whom he had set down as half way gone to the dogs long ago.

“ Yes—and Robinson,” continued Vernon, who having determined upon not imparting a tittle of his affairs to the other, as suddenly resolved to draw him completely off the scent—“ your bill of costs must be formidable, I suspect ; I wish you would cause it to be made out ; I should like to pay it.”

“ Oh, my dear sir !” cried Robinson, in ecstasy ; “ pray don’t mention it. Ever the same, I perceive ; the same liberal, considerate

Mr. Vernon. But you are not going? Won't you stay awhile?"

"No, I must away," said Vernon; "pray don't rise."

"But I insist," said Robinson, opening the door with great humility. "Will you allow me to say one word? Your friend, Mrs. Maxwell—"

"Has arranged her difficulties for the present, I hear?"

"Yes, sir; but still—"

"I do not wish to hear anything respecting her," said Vernon.

"Enough, I am dumb," cried Robinson; "but still—"

"Nay, I wont hear a word. Good afternoon."

The false spirits Vernon contrived to muster during his interview with the solicitor, deserted him as soon as he found himself in the street; and once more he felt the imminent peril of his situation. Two resources which had presented

themselves to him, he had rejected, and where was he now to turn ? and with what hope of extrication ? It was more from the force of old associations, than from any design of entering, that he found himself upon the steps of his club. He was not sorry that he had taken this direction. Wine could at all events assuage, if not banish, the remembrance of difficulties upon which he felt he could no longer dwell with safety. He entered the room, and sat himself down, and was soon lost in deep and still unavailing reflection, which, useless as he could not but know it to be, he could not choose but indulge.

He was soon aroused from his reverie by a familiar shake of the shoulder, administered by one whose nerves apparently were in the highest possible perfection.

“ Ha ! Vernon, my dear fellow, who would have dreamed of seeing you here ? The porter told me you never came now.”

“ My dear Moore,” cried Vernon, starting

up, and shaking his friend heartily by the hand, "I did not know you were returned to England."

"Oh, yes, some time since. But, why won't you come home, and dine with me to-day? Mrs. Moore will be delighted to see you."

Vernon accepted the invitation, and the gentlemen in a few minutes departed.

It was not altogether to escape from his own thoughts, that Vernon consented to accompany his friend home. Moore was a man of very good property, and a few years since had married an heiress of great wealth; and the thought suddenly struck Vernon, that even now, at the last moment, Moore had it in his power to extricate him from his present situation. He was perfectly assured of his friendship; and besides, there seemed something providential in this accidental rencontre, which infused new life into him.

It was not till long after Mrs. Moore had

retired to the drawing-room, that Vernon was furnished with an opportunity of broaching the subject in which he was so deeply interested ; and when an opportunity did occur, an unaccountable sinking of the heart, which almost amounted for the moment to an entire suspension of the faculty of speech, withheld him. It was a considerable period before a second occasion presented itself, of alluding to his private affairs ; for Moore was a man gifted with an infinite amount of small talk, and could, indeed, converse upon most topics with all the fluency, if not with all the wisdom, of a philosopher. A second, and a third occasion were lost, until it became late, and the expediency of sticking any longer to the bottle was at least questionable.

“ Well,” said Moore, at length, “ and how gets on the banking business ? These have been rather ticklish times of late, with you gentlemen, I hear.”

“ They have, indeed,” answered Vernon ;

“and we have not fared much better than our neighbours, I can tell you,” he added, with forced gaiety. “Forty or fifty thousand would be by no means unacceptable at this moment; and we could afford good interest for it, too.”

“Indeed !” cried Moore. “Well, I thought you bankers never wanted money. Now, had I required a few thousands—which, by the bye, I have wanted most miserably of late—I should have made sure you could let me have it.”

Vernon’s heart sunk within him when he heard this.

“At any other time,” he faltered, “we should, of course, have been happy to serve you ; but now ——. Well, but you talk of wanting money, Moore ; why, your own property, and Mrs. Moore’s fortune——”

“Very good,” interrupted Moore ; “and, thank God, all right yet. But, Vernon, my boy, you don’t know what I lost last season at

Frascati's ;" and he significantly shook his elbow. "A word to the wise, eh?"

"Oh! I see," replied Vernon, with a painful smile.

It now occurred to the banker, to make Moore his confidant, and to lay before him unreservedly the real situation of his affairs, to crave his advice, and to implore his assistance. The thought no sooner entered his mind, than it arose to his lips; but his courage deserted him the moment he was about to speak; a cold sweat overspread his forehead; and, as the secret forced itself back upon his heart, a faintness pervaded his frame—a dizziness swam before his eyes, and he was about to fall from his chair.

"Good God! my dear fellow," cried Moore, alarmed beyond measure, "what's the matter? You look monstrously pale; has the wine disagreed with you?"

"No, no, I am better now," said Vernon,

passing his hand across his forehead; "I am subject to these attacks. I will go home now; the air will do me good."

"Take care of yourself, that's all," said Moore. "Won't you take coffee before you go?"

"Thank you, no," said Vernon, anxious to get away. "I shall see you again shortly. God bless you, Moore."

"And you, my dear fellow. I am always at home, or at the club."

Vernon walked a few paces and stopped. He gazed before him for a time vaguely. "Oh, my God!" he exclaimed, striking his forehead violently, "what weakness is this which overcomes me at the moment I have most need of self-possession? what can it be? Is it a curse upon me for my villany? It is—it is—and I have brought it upon myself. But wherefore should I call it a curse?" he added, as he proceeded rapidly down the street; "it

is the blessed interference of the Almighty, who will no longer permit me to draw misery and ruin upon the heads of others. I have made my own fate, and I *must* abide the consequences !”

CHAPTER IV.

“ So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,
Farewell remorse ; all good to me is lost.”

VERNON gazed around him. He was in Leicester-square. “ I cannot go home to-night,” he muttered to himself, “ and, whatever the issue, I will show myself in Lombard-street to-morrow.”

This sudden resolution, so emphatically pronounced, relieved his mind in a great measure of the present weight which oppressed it. He walked with a firmer and more deliberate step, and, entering the coffee-room of the Hummums, desired a bed to be prepared for him.

It was not until a very late hour, and after

having swallowed several tumblers of brandy and water, that he proceeded to his chamber ; where, casting himself upon the bed, he was soon in a profound slumber, from which he did not awake till noon on the following day.

He arose hastily, and descended to the coffee-room, and approaching the glass, surveyed himself for a considerable time. “There is nothing in this face that betrays weakness—my nerves all right, yes—I shall do now, I shall do now : he shall not triumph over me, at all events ; yes—I will see him,” he added ; “the worst is past, and it is time this hell of torture should end.”

It was not long ere he reached Lombard-street. He did not for a moment slacken his pace ; but passing straight through the shop, entered abruptly the private office of his partner.

Warkworth, with his friend Mr. Graham, was standing facing the door, as Vernon approached, prepared, and as it seemed, in expectation of his arrival. Warkworth was pale,

and the quiver of his lip betrayed the agitation which he could not control. Mr. Graham made a stiff and formal bow, which Vernon as coldly returned.

“Will you be seated?” said Warkworth, and he was about to hand a chair.

“Allow me,” said Graham; “your hand trembles, Mr. Warkworth.”

“I am getting old,” said Warkworth tremulously.

“I would rather stand,” said Vernon, in a hollow voice.

“Well, Mr. Vernon,” said Warkworth with suppressed emotion, “Mr. Hopwood’s bills have been presented, and are paid.”

He paused; but receiving no answer continued, “I will not deceive you, Vernon; I heard of these bills two months ago—by chance—and I am glad of it, for I have been prepared for them. I must also tell you, that Sewell has recalled the money he entrusted to us, and that it has been returned.”

Here Vernon groaned, and covering his face with his hands, sunk into a chair.

“Do not think,” continued Warkworth, “that our friend Graham—for he is your friend as well as mine—is come here to be a witness of your——” he paused, “your misfortunes, my dear Vernon; what transpires this day, will never pass his lips.”

“On my sacred word as a man—no,” said Graham solemnly; “my dear sir, make yourself easy upon that score.”

“But it is time we should come to an understanding,” continued Warkworth. “My calculation, then is, that you have withdrawn your share of the capital of the house, and it is advisable we should dissolve partnership.”

Vernon looked up vaguely.

“What think you, Mr. Graham?” inquired Warkworth.

“Decidedly!”

“But I do not wish that you should be left without means,” continued Warkworth; “it

were not right you should be. You have, in one sense, an hereditary interest in this house. I propose, then, to settle upon your two sisters jointly £1,000 a-year, and the same sum upon yourself. Is it fair?—when at your leisure you examine the books, I think you will find it so.”

Vernon had been sitting in a state of stupefaction during this speech—his eyes fixed immoveably upon the ground. He did not alter his position—not a limb moved—not a breath seemed to proceed from his body.

“Let Mr. Graham retire for a few minutes—I wish it—” said Vernon, in an almost inaudible tone.

Warkworth motioned to his friend, who retired into an inner room. Vernon arose suddenly, and advancing towards his partner, caught him by the hand, and wrung it in silence. “Warkworth,” he gasped, at length, “this kindness, which I did not expect—this generosity, which I had no right to look for, which I do not deserve—overwhelm—unman me. Could

I shed tears—but I cannot—you would see—you would feel—that I had still some honour—some shame, remaining in me. Can I make any reparation? say that I can—let me still be your partner—the business shall be yours—let me still remain—I will devote my life to you, Warkworth.”

“Impossible!” exclaimed the old man, returning the pressure of his partner’s hand, “impossible—it must not be;” and he averted his head, and wept like a child.

“I obey—I submit,” said Vernon; “indeed, I had no right to expect it. But let not the partnership be dissolved now—not at this moment.”

“That must not be,” cried Warkworth; “it might excite suspicion. A month, or even two, will be time enough.”

“I thank you; and I am grateful for your kindness;” said Vernon half wildly. “I have no further business in this house, and I will go.”

“You must not leave us yet,” said Wark-

worth kindly, taking him by the arm, "where would you go? Compose yourself, and remain here to-day."

"That I could not do, for the world's wealth," said Vernon, shaking his head; "I shall find a place to go to—I dare say.—Home? Yes, I have a home, all to myself!"

"Come, come—be more calm—collect yourself; you are not in a situation to go any where at this moment."

"Oh yes, I am." He placed his hand to his forehead. "I am not quite right *here* just now, Warkworth; but I shall be better soon. Dissipation has done this—it destroys a man at last, Warkworth. I will think of what you have said, by and bye. Nay, nay, I am quite well again. The weight is removed from my brain. Make my apology to Graham. I could not speak to him at present."

It was with certain misgivings which, however, he dared not express, that Warkworth permitted Vernon to leave the banking-house.

He watched him from the door till he was out of sight, and then, with a sigh, returned to his friend. The consciousness that he had performed a most unpleasant duty, with honour, and the conviction he felt that everything would in future be conducted under his own eye, and that Vernon had no longer the power to compromise, or endanger the reputation of the house, tended considerably to elevate his spirits, and in earnest conversation with Graham he soon forgot the state in which his partner had left him.

The condition of mind in which Vernon quitted the house, could Warkworth have comprehended the existence of such feeling, might well have justified his misgivings respecting him. To the first emotions excited by Warkworth's generosity towards him, succeeded a sense of shame, of mortification, and of despair, which at one moment brought the whole ignominy of his situation clearly before him, and at the next threw his mind into utter darkness and con-

fusion. Whither should he fly? Where conceal himself from the scorn—or from the ridicule, which is worse than scorn—of mankind? Everybody as he passed appeared to his disturbed fancy to be gazing upon him—to be looking into his very soul, and to be reading there the history of his debasement—of his degradation!

He stopped suddenly, and hastened up a gateway.

“Whither am I going?” he murmured, wildly. “Home—yes; nobody there can know anything of this? And what if they could? these things have happened before. I am not the first scoundrel that ever lived in England, and died abroad! Aye, I will go abroad. Yes, I shall escape them there, and find good company to keep me in countenance.”

A servant hurried to the gate, as Vernon alighted from his horse.

“You have been riding hard, sir,” said the man, taking his reins.

Vernon stared at him for a moment.—
“What—riding hard? Yes, it is good for me ;
it does me good, Thomas.”

“Well,” he said to the porter, who stood with the door open, gazing at his master in astonishment, “has any body called since I left?”

“Only Captain Laurence, sir,” said the man, following him into the parlour.

“Curse him!” he muttered, in an inaudible tone; “you delivered him my message, of course?”

“What message, sir?” stammered the man.

“Fool!” said Vernon; “did I not order you to inform him, that if he had any communication to make to me, it must be made by letter—that I would not see him?”

“You did, sir; but before I could deliver the message, the captain entered the house, saying that he wanted particularly to see you, and that he would wait your return.”

“Where is he now, then? when did he go? is he gone?” inquired Vernon, hastily.

“ He is here still,” said the man, hesitating ;
“ in the library, I believe.”

“ You have not obeyed my orders, Dixon,” said the banker. “ It is of little consequence. You must look out for another situation ; I hope it will be a better one than the present.”

“ I am extremely sorry, sir,” said the man, grieved ; “ I really did not mean—”

“ Nay, I am not offended now,” said Vernon, turning upon his heel ; “ I should be compelled to part with you in a month or two. Leave the room.”

The man retired, perplexed in the extreme, and calling together a general meeting of the servants of the house, tapped his forehead significantly, and “ hoped master was all right in the upper story.”

In about half an hour the footman knocked with considerable diffidence at the parlour door.

“ What now ? what do you want ?” said Vernon, starting from the sofa, as the man entered the room.

“ Captain Laurence desired me to say, sir, that he is very anxious to see you for a few minutes.”

“ Tell Captain Laurence that I can’t—that I won’t see him. Remind him that I have already written to him to that effect. What is the fool staring at? Begone.”

“ And yet,” resumed Vernon, when the footman had closed the door; “ why not see the man at once, and tell him plainly and calmly that our acquaintance must henceforth cease—that the connexion must be broken off.”

He rung the bell violently. “ You may tell Captain Laurence that I will see him,” he said to the astonished servant; “ I am at his service as soon as he pleases.”

When Laurence entered at the further end of the room, Vernon was standing, in one of those constrained attitudes which men, endeavouring to appear calm and quite at their ease, contrive invariably to assume.

“ Will you take a seat, Captain Laurence,” said the banker, with a stiff bow.

Laurence sat down, and placing his hat upon the table, gazed at Vernon in surprise for a few moments.

“My dear fellow,” said he at length, “what is the meaning of this strange conduct? Here have you been, during the last three months, acting the most extraordinary part I ever witnessed in my life. I never was more astonished—more surprised.”

“With less occasion to be so, I dare say,” interrogated Vernon. “I am glad,” he added, with bitterness, “I am able to create any sensation, now-a-days—even one of surprise.”

“Well, but—” said Laurence, impatiently—“I can’t understand this, upon my life, Vernon. Why do you treat me thus? Have I inadvertantly offended you? if so, I am really much concerned.”

“No doubt of it,” said Vernon.

“Well, then,” continued Laurence, “can’t you explain this mystery? Some skulking scoundrel has been calumniating me—has been

abusing your credulity with falsehoods against me."

"No;" cried the banker, doggedly.

"You have then misconceived some part of my conduct?"

"I have *misconceived* nothing, Captain Laurence."

"Mr. Vernon," said Laurence, sternly, surveying the other with a determined look; "your conduct is neither straightforward, nor, permit me to say, manly."

"You say so, do you?" said Vernon, fiercely springing to his feet.

"Hear me," continued Laurence, "I should have resented your treatment of me long ago; but that—"

"You thought better of it, I presume," said Vernon, with a sneer.

"I will not quarrel with you," said Laurence; "and I am sorry I said so much a moment ago. I see you are excited, and I pass over your insinuations. I was given to under-

stand by your sister that you were very much harassed a month or two since by a multiplicity of business, and—”

“ Took, therefore,” interrupted Vernon, “ that opportunity of importuning me about business of your own.”

“ Not so—not so,” said Laurence ; “ how can you call it by that name? It was your mother’s earnest and last request, Vernon—it is your sister Mary’s wish—it shall be the study of my life to make Charlotte happy.”

“ Oh!—I see—I see ;—I know it all,” exclaimed Vernon, in a tone of disgust. He paused for some minutes, and continued, more calmly, “ My sister told you truly, Captain Laurence, that, for some months past, I have been very much harassed by business of a very important and serious character. At that period I withheld my consent to the marriage of my sister with you. Now, sir, without acquainting you with the precise nature of that business, I may tell you, that it has *now* as-

sumed an aspect which utterly precludes the possibility of your fulfilling that contract. I do you, therefore, a kindness and a service by releasing you."

"How so?" said Laurence, in amaze. "My dear Vernon, explain;—or, if not so, furnish me with some slight intimation of the cause of so extraordinary a determination on your part:—for—pardon me—I cannot think it any thing else."

"You may think as you please, sir," said Vernon, coldly, who imagined he could perceive, in the manner of Laurence, a perfect knowledge of recent events, and mistook his calmness for suppressed pleasure, that the proposition to break off the match emanated from himself. "I neither can nor will explain any thing. Time is a sure hand at these matters—he will explain all, and quite soon enough."

"Then permit me to say," cried Laurence, rising, "that I no longer look to you for a definitive answer to my application. I feel I have

too long degraded myself by referring to you."

"Then to whom, Captain Laurence, do you propose to apply?" said Vernon; "I presume I may inquire."

"To your sisters, sir," said Laurence, deeply mortified; "and if they are disposed to concur in your unreasonable opposition, I can have nothing further to say:—but not until I hear as much from their own lips, will I—or, indeed ought I—to relinquish my claims."

"As you please," said Vernon, with an air of indifference. "I presume you know where to find them?"

"I do; and have already waited upon them several times at Brighton."

"Aye, indeed,—have you?" said Vernon. "That must cease, Captain Laurence—that must not be, sir;—it must be put an end to.—I am master of my own family, and will remain so. Good evening, sir."

"I wish you were master of yourself, Ver-

non," said Laurence, walking to the door ;
" but I will say no more. I presume our acquaintance is at an end ? "

" Quite so—at least for the present." And having bowed Captain Laurence from the apartment with punctilious formality, he retired to his own room.

CHAPTER V.

“ ————— To exult
E'en o'er an enemy oppress'd, and heap
Affliction on the afflicted, is the mark,
And the mean triumph of a dastard soul.”

It is a remark which, although it has not the charm of novelty to recommend it, is, at least, not yet worn quite threadbare—that evils assume a more formidable aspect when seen from a distance, than when they immediately confront us. Shakspeare has indeed said—

“ Between the acting of a dreadful thing,
And its completion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.”

And this, doubtless, is true ; but when we are to be acted upon by circumstances which we cannot evade or escape—when some inevitable

calamity approaches, for which we are permitted time to prepare—the mind insensibly, and of necessity, conforms itself to it; and the nearer it approaches—immediately it becomes, as it were, palpable,—its real dimensions are known, and the exhalations which surrounded and magnified it are dispersed.

Six weeks had barely elapsed since Vernon had acceded to the proposition of Warkworth, before it was generally known that the former was no longer a partner in the banking-house—that he had retired altogether from business—and that all experiments upon his credulity, his generosity, or his weakness, must henceforth be abandoned, or be conducted on a much more limited scale than formerly.

As is commonly the case upon such occasions, the state of matters with Vernon had been suspected long before, and had been so generally whispered about, and commented upon, that when the dissolution of partnership appeared in the Gazette, it could hardly be called news.

When all was over, Vernon experienced a relief, a comparative lightness of spirits, which he had not for many years enjoyed. His career of duplicity, of embarrassment, of almost inextricable involvement, was at an end. If he had not much to hope for in the future, he had at least nothing to fear ; and even now he should be in a situation to do partial justice to his sisters—to satisfy all demands upon him—and to retain sufficient to support himself like a gentleman.

And then the world, which is bad enough, heaven knows, is, nevertheless, a world that studies to save appearances. It will not do—it is not the thing—to cut a man the instant he loses *caste* in society—at the very moment he ceases to be respectable in the scale, as one of weight and substance. A bow, and a squeeze of the hand at parting, are good manners, at all events ; and these fell to the share of Vernon. But by none was so much clamorous sympathy manifested, as by those who had either never

been ambitious of rising in the world, or who had never been blest with the power of doing so, and who were secretly delighted to behold one of the “great ones of the city” reduced to their own level. But that which acted most acutely upon Vernon’s feelings was the anxiety and concern evinced by his sisters. He knew that he deserved their reproaches, and perhaps could have been better able to withstand them ; but their tenderness and solicitude, whilst it disturbed, unmanned him. A rebuke was conveyed in every word of affection that fell from their lips ; and it wounded him the more deeply, because it was undesigned. It acted as a counterbalance to these feelings, that at this time he had, or thought he had, reason to be offended with them. He had peremptorily enjoined his elder sister to discourage any further intimacy or acquaintance with Captain Laurence ;—a command which his sister plainly intimated to him it was not her intention to obey. He, however, laid a lighter stress upon

the injunction than he was wont to exercise in matters that concerned the maintenance of his own authority ; since he was secretly of opinion that Laurence, when he came to the knowledge of his (Vernon's) altered position in the world, would voluntarily discontinue his visits. One circumstance shortly after appeared strongly to favour this supposition ; for Laurence, almost as soon as the situation of Vernon became a matter of suspicion, on the plea of urgent business, had retired to Leicestershire, and had not since returned.

It cannot appear strange to the reader, who by this time, doubtless, pretty well understands the character of Vernon, that he was as much disgusted with Laurence for taking him, as he imagined, at his word, as he had before been enraged at his obstinate disregard of it. What seemed to be the cold-blooded, mercenary character of the man, was now clearly displayed to him ; and he determined, if possible, at any personal sacrifice, to make up the entire sum he

was indebted to his sisters. He anticipated with delight the bitter mortification of Laurence, when he discovered that his intended victim, whom he had heartlessly abandoned, occupied the same position, in respect of pecuniary means, as heretofore; and that the prize he had once sought to gain was still a prize, but one of which he could no longer hope to be permitted to possess himself.

It was partly with a view of achieving this object, that Vernon gave directions to Messrs. Mottram and Sniggles to advertise the sale of his estate at Egham,—a business which these gentlemen immediately took in hand with an alacrity indicative of no slight degree of pleasure, in being called upon to perform so important an operation. In point of fact, Messrs. Mottram and Sniggles had long been striving to put forth that branch from the parent stem,—the surveying profession,—but hitherto the slender off-shoot had not flourished. Now, however, the whole country would soon be ap-

prised that they (Messrs. M. and S.) were indeed house and land agents on a large scale;—and now it was for Mr. Mottram to show that he possessed talents for the pulpit, of which the parlour-frequenters of the King's Head had unfairly and unkindly suspected him to be deficient. That delight, however, which enlarged minds invariably feel when an opportunity presents itself of vindicating their claims to due consideration and respect, is very frequently a delight that abhors and shuns an outward manifestation of itself.

Mr. Mottram doubtless felt, that, sooner or later, his time must come; that genius, like murder, will out; that talents are seldom hidden for life under a bushel; and he comported himself with so much calmness and modesty, during the interval between the first advertisement and the day of sale, that none but the most minute and subtle observers could have detected the slightest alteration in his manners and general appearance.

Not so, Mr. Sniggles; to whom, to feel any degree of pleasure, and not to communicate it to all the specimens of the habitable world that fell in his way, was a physical impossibility. Mr. Sniggles during the last fortnight had occupied himself in going over—in looking over—in looking at—and in thinking about—the property for sale. He had busied himself in the counting-house, in folding and placing in parcels of equal size a pile of printed forms, stating the conditions of sale, and all the particulars relating to the estate; with the names printed on the back, of the parties empowered to carry it into effect. He had given away, as they were applied for, “lots,” as he expressed himself, of these documents, and every evening he was to be seen parading the neighbourhood with one outspread in his hand, talking to his friends about the “splendid property”—“fine estate”—“capital investment”—“nice spot”—and the like.

Upon Mr. Sniggles devolved the duty, on the

morning of sale, of arranging the situation of the rostrum in the assembly room of the King's Head, for his partner's reception, and of seeing that immense bills were posted upon the wooden pillars of the portico, and hung from every window in the house. This done, immediately the company began to arrive, Mr. Sniggles placed a pen behind his ear, whispered his partner at short intervals—nodded to one person—chattered with another—and then came down stairs, and up stairs, and down again—and into the coffee-room—and out of the coffee-room into the bar—and out of the bar into the coffee-room—and overturned one gentleman, and apologized to another—and hurried to the door-step, and looked all ways at once, so that it might be imagined that the little man had just sold his own soul, by auction, to Old Nick, whom he expected every moment to come and “clear” his purchase.

It cannot be wondered at, that an event like this caused no slight sensation in the neigh-

bourhood ; and that some time before the hour appointed for the commencement of the sale, the assembly-room of the King's Head was nearly filled with company. Amongst others Mr. Robinson was in attendance, and was engaged in busy and almost exclusive communion with Mr. Mottram at a side-table. Mr. Hopwood was likewise present, with an intention of bidding for the property, if there was any chance of getting it at a low figure—it would do so admirably for a marriage present for Georgina. Nor could Mr. Clarencieux satisfy himself as to the propriety of being absent upon an occasion like the present. Occupying a conspicuous situation at a large table in the middle of the room, he sat perusing and reperusing the printed paper which Sniggles, when he entered, slid into his hand ; but there was reason to fear, from the expression of his aristocratic features, which ever and anon, as he elevated his head to scan the momentarily increasing company, assumed an

air of perfect indifference, that it would be hardly worth his while to become the owner of the estate. Indeed, he had informed Mrs. M'Farlam, the baker's wife, of whose house he occupied the first floor furnished, that he had no intention of bidding for the property. By the side of this gentleman sat his friend, Mr. Grayling, who had contrived to carry himself up stairs, and whose sole object in coming was to while his tedious leisure till dinner-time, and who had given orders to his indispensable attendant, the boy, to come at two o'clock, and assist him in the removal of himself to his own house.

In one corner of the room, apart from the rest, stood two worthy people in deep and confidential talk :—Mr. Jabez Hunsman, who had been dispatched thither by Mrs. Maxwell, for the purpose of watching the proceedings, and of duly reporting progress when they were concluded ; and Mr. Jeffries, who had accompanied his friend and master, Mr. Robinson,

partly to indicate by his presence the importance of the latter, and partly because Mr. Robinson expected a certain client to call upon him that morning, whom he had no particular wish that Mr. Jeffries should encounter in his absence.

“Why, Jack,” said Hunsman, addressing his friend, “this is a queer start, arn’t it—this break-down of the banker? I should have thought the linch-pins had been all right there, whatever others may be.”

“It is so, Mr. Hunsman,” answered Jeffries, with a somewhat dignified air; “and we thought for a long time that all *was* right. He owes us a considerable sum: we have been grossly deceived in him.”

“And who the devil are ‘*we*?’ and what do you mean by ‘*us*?’” asked Mr. Hunsman, in surprise.

“Why, Mr. Robinson and myself, to be sure,” said Mr. Jeffries. “I say, we have

reason to complain of Mr. Vernon's want of candour towards us."

Here the inconsiderate Jabez Hunsman gave vent to an unseemly burst of laughter, which caused the vivacious eye of the ever-active Sniggles to rest upon him with a baleful expression.

"Why, Jack Jeffries," cried Hunsman, moderating his tone, "you're a precious humbug, I don't think? What! such a hunted devil as you draw yourself up alongside Robinson? It's not acting consistent, Jack: I told you my mind the other day, at the office."

"What do you mean, Mr. Jabez Hunsman?" replied Jeffries. "If I have been unfortunate, *you* know very well that I shan't remain so long. Mr. Robinson has been a good friend to me, and, so far as my duty to my family will permit me, I am determined to prove grateful for it. Why, one can't go on for ever in the loose way we used to conduct ourselves, Hunsman. The duty I owe to my

wife and family, as I remarked—that sacred duty which ought to take precedence—”

“Come down, will you, out of them blessed flights,” interrupted Hunsman; “blow me, if it don’t make me ill to listen to you. It’s just the way Betsy rigs me sometimes. Duty to wife and family! all a hum, and no mistake. She learned that story of old Griddle, who used the Three Crowns, some years back. Why, you must remember the old fellow, Jack—transported for bigamy, you know.”

“Yes, I think I recollect,” said Jeffries, whose reserve, under the influence of his former companion, was always sure to melt away; “I recollect Griddle very well; wasn’t he—”

“Pulled up,” said Hunsman, quickly, “for beating his wife with a crow-bar, and keeping his eldest boy in the coal-cellar, for three weeks, with a chain round his body, and no grub in it. A precious article he was.”

“Such a monster deserved to die on the gibbet!” said Jeffries, with an appropriate expression of moral warmth.

“ Aye, sure,” cried Hunsman, “ although he *was* always going on about the ‘ duty he owed to his wife and family.’ But, I say, Jack, isn’t it a bad case of the banker? Such a nob as he used to be ! such a slap-up swell ! and, mind you, quite the gentleman with it—I believe you—no mistake there.”

“ He *was* very much of the gentleman,” acquiesced Jeffries.

“ Warn’t he then ?” resumed the other. “ I’ll tell you what, Jack, if it hadn’t been for her ladyship up yonder—you know who I mean—Mrs. M——, the banker might have held up his head with the best on ’em to this day.”

“ Oh, no,” said Jeffries, “ I don’t think that ; there were other causes.”

“ That woman doubled him up, I tell you,” returned Hunsman, doggedly ; “ why, she could do anything with him at one time, she could. The sight of tin she’s hocused him out of ! it’s enough to make one’s hair stand on end. At one time he could deny her nothing

she set her heart—no, I'm blessed if she's much of that—nothing she set her mind upon."

"That was decidedly foolish," remarked Jeffries.

"Oh, he was soft, Jack; precious green, and that's all about it. But, mark me, I've a notion the smash will soon turn up yonder," and Hunsman winked his eye.

"What! sooner than we expected?" inquired Jeffries.

"Don't shout quite so loud, that's a good man," suggested Jabez; "we don't want all the room to be as wise as ourselves. Yes, I'll tell you more about it to-night."

"How do you know?" said Jeffries, interested.

"Never you mind that *now*; I'm not a catholic; I'm not obliged to confess; and, if I was, you are not the pope o' Rome, Jack. But there'll be a wind-up—that's coming to the pint. Why, lord love you! it would have done your eyes good to see the gentry that used to come

down. None of your half-and-half rubbish, but the real thing—tip-top swells. The larks they had!—the shindies they kicked up! But my lady has seen their backs for the last time, I'm thinking. They've mizzled, Jack—mizzled. But I've told you all afore."

"That's a bad job, I'm afraid, for the lady," remarked Jeffries.

"Well, it isn't over and above pleasant, I can tell you," said the communicative Jabez. "But, Jack, you should see the visitors that call upon her now, a trifle too often, I fancy; coves that won't take 'call again!' for an answer; fellows that have long bills, and have got a receipt-stamp in their pockets, which they want to fill up, but mustn't. You should see the long faces they pull, as they toddle down the steps; about as long as their bills, and no mistake."

"Oh, it has come to that, has it?" said Jeffries. "Then good-bye to Mrs. Maxwell for the present."

“What a right down severe plant that was,” remarked Hunsman, lowering his voice to a whisper, “your governor wanted to make upon the banker a few months back.”

“What was that? I never heard of it,” said Jeffries.

“Oh, it was before you went to the old scamp again, I fancy. He put a sham distraint into the house, and then inveigled Vernon to call, and then wanted to gammon him to sign a bond for the amount, and he’d get the matter settled, he said—and be d— to him. But it was no go; the banker was down upon him, for once; he wouldn’t put his fist to it, and left my lady and old barnacles in a bit of a huff. My eyes and limbs! the rumpus that came off after he left, between them two innocents. At it they went, tooth and nail, hammer and tongs; blest if it wasn’t as good as a play, till the lady showed him the door, and was going to call me to trundle him out.”

“I’ll tell you what,” said Jeffries, with the familiarity of former times, and in a confidential key, “that governor of mine is the preciouslest old scamp that ever *wasn’t* taken up; you don’t know the artful dodges he’s up to.”

“I can pretty well guess, though,” said Hunsman. “That wasn’t a bad start the other day.”

“Well, if I had Robinson’s abilities,” resumed the other, “do you think I’d be as I am now? I’d ride in my carriage before long.”

“Then I can recommend you a coachman,” said Hunsman; “of all the sights you ever clapt eyes on, you never see anything like old Maxwell, at this present writing. The old humbug knows there’s a screw loose, and begins to quake; he is always in the cellar, swigging away at the barrel of ale, and when he has made himself precious lushy, my gentleman toddles into the kitchen, and cries like a babby; I tell him if he grizzles so, he’ll turn his very

wig gray ; and he says he don't care how soon he does. Wouldn't he like to get a good berth in a snug family again ? He wouldn't mind seeing himself on the top of a hammer-cloth, if that's all ; but I suppose the lady would think that *in for a dig*, as they call it."

Jeffries was about to make a reply to this speech ; but was prevented by a sudden sensation, followed by a deep silence that pervaded the room. Mr. Mottram was about to mount the pulpit ; a movement from which he was delayed by some whispering from Mr. Robinson, and a private communication on the part of Mr. Hopwood.

"I say Jack," said Hunsman ; "suppose we go below for a few minutes, and take a glass together. Mottram will be at it for half-an-hour, at least, and we had better consult on what we talked on the other day."

"I might be wanted," suggested Jeffries.

"What ! is Robinson going to take his chance with the rest ?" said Hunsman.

“ Yes ; he has come down for the express purpose of buying the estate, if possible.”

“ Oh ! then he must want *you*, I don’t think ; make yourself easy about that ; come, I’ve got a sight to tell you about Bouverie.”

“ Well, I don’t mind, for a few minutes,” and the two friends retired, to take a little necessary refreshment, and discuss their affairs.

And now, Mr. Mottram, with a slight feeling of nervousness, proper to the occasion, climbed into the pulpit, and fortified by a glass of rum and milk, furnished by his attentive partner, who whispered in his ear, that it was always done at the auction mart, began to hold forth in eloquent but appropriate terms, upon the singular, and indeed exclusive merits of the property he had the honour and the happiness to offer for public sale. The desirableness of the purchase—how indispensable, how incumbent a duty it was upon every one in the room, to make himself immediately possessed of it—were duly set forth, and enlarged upon. But

why should we offer a minute description of that, which the reader may at any time witness, performed by a greater master even than Mr. Mottram,—even by that nabob of auctioneers, Mr. George Robins, from whom Mottram had in truth derived his inspiration, having gone to London upon three several occasions, for the special purpose of taking gratuitous lessons from that unrivalled artist. Suffice it to say, that the estate fetched a much higher price than the majority of the room anticipated; that Mr. Hopwood nodded his head till he got a crick in the neck, and gave up the pursuit in despair; that Mr. Clarencieux dotted down the biddings, till the lead of his pencil broke; that Mr. Grayling was observed to open his eyes twice, very much wider than usual; and that finally, Mr. Robinson was declared the purchaser, and congratulated thereupon, by Messrs. Mottram and Sniggles, respectively. The company having, at the conclusion of the sale, departed, Mr.

Robinson gave to Mr. Mottram the name of his principal, for he was but an agent in the matter, and arranged to pay over the purchase money on the following day. These necessary points having been satisfactorily settled, Mr. Robinson, accompanied by Mr. Sniggles, whose duty it was to inform Vernon of the result of the sale, entered the Egham stage; Mr. Jeffries, slightly fuddled, managed to get on the box; and in due time the party was set down at the Golden Cross, Charing Cross; Mr. Robinson and his assistant betaking themselves to the office of the former, and Mr. Sniggles making the best of his way to Jermyn-street, where Vernon had for some time past occupied a suite of apartments.

Mr. Sniggles being ushered into the drawing-room, presented himself, with his usual volatile grace, before Vernon, who was seated in his dressing-gown and slippers, with a bottle of wine before him. "Ah! Sniggles," cried Vernon; "I'm glad to see you; I half expected

you, but not so soon. You are a man of business, Sniggles," and he rang the bell for fresh glasses.

"Business must be attended to," said Sniggles, rubbing his hands, "and I am happy to say I think you will not be dissatisfied with our proceedings to-day."

"This little matter is settled, then, I presume?" said Vernon. "Did the sale go off well? Pray who is the fortunate man?"

"The sale went off wonderfully well, sir;" cried Sniggles, "at least every one thought so. The fortunate man, as you justly term him, is your friend—I believe I may say so—Mr. Robinson, solicitor, of this city.

"Pish!" exclaimed Vernon, suddenly drawing himself up in his chair.

Mr. Sniggles was slightly annoyed at this outbreak. "Did you speak, Mr. Vernon?" he at length thought it the best thing he could do to inquire.

"No—no—no;" said Vernon recollecting

himself ; “ I beg your pardon, it was nothing. Fill your glass, I beg of you.”

Mr. Sniggles obeyed ; and taking off a bumper, produced his pocket book, from which he drew a paper upon which he gazed for a moment with a smile of satisfaction.

“ Here, sir,” said he, handing the paper to Vernon, “ here is the sum we obtained for the property—the amount I mean ; we touch the ready to-morrow.”

“ Come, this will do,” cried Vernon, “ this is much beyond my expectations ; I think I may consider myself fortunate—what think you, Sniggles ? I hope Mr. Robinson will pay the amount of the purchase-money into your own hands to-morrow without fail. Every thing is straightforward and satisfactory ?”

“ Quite so—perfectly so,” cried Sniggles ; “ by the bye, Mr. Robinson is not the *bonâ fide* purchaser—I forgot to mention that—in fact, he is merely the agent in the business.”

Vernon was considerably surprised—who

could possibly have employed Robinson in this business? His thoughts instantly recurred to Lord Walgrave or Mr. Hopwood.

“Lord Walgrave, perhaps?” he inquired.

“No, Mr. Vernon, no,” said Sniggles, smiling mysteriously.

“Mr. Hopwood then?”

“Still wide of the mark,” cried Sniggles, swallowing another glass: “Lord bless you—Hopwood? no; he’s too shy a cock to trust any one but himself, and that he won’t always do.”

“Mr. Hopwood,” said Vernon gravely, “may be a shy cock, as you call him, for aught I know or care; but really Mr. Sniggles, it strikes me, that at this moment you yourself are ambitious of showing yourself a bird of the same feather. Pray, sir, be so kind as to let me know at once who is the purchaser of this property?”

“Why, sir,” cried Sniggles slightly abashed, “he is a gentleman whose name, until to-day, I never had the pleasure of hearing—Captain Laurence.”

Vernon was sipping his wine at the moment the name was announced to him. Great was the astonishment—not to call it consternation—of Sniggles, when Vernon, with a bitter imprecation, dashed his wine glass into the grate, and began to pace the room with hurried strides.

Little Mr. Sniggles arose in no ordinary fluster. “What is the matter, Mr. Vernon?” said he, “are you unwell—ill—indisposed?”

“Yes—yes—leave me now, Mr. Sniggles—I am subject to these fits.”

Mr. Sniggles was too glad to possess himself of his hat for that purpose. “The cash shall be forwarded to you to-morrow—certain,” said he.

“Thank you, thank you ; much obliged for your kindness and attention to my interests.—Good morning.”

The astounded moiety of the respectable firm of Mottram and Sniggles was by no means slow to take advantage of the hint conveyed to him, that he was at liberty to retire, which he ac-

cordingly did without any troublesome formality.

“D— him ! d— him !” exclaimed Vernon, in the bitterness of his heart, as the door closed on the auctioneer ; “ this is the basest insult of all. What will Moore say to this ? He won’t, surely, tell me now that I have mistaken him !”

CHAPTER VI.

“ Mine honour is my life ; both grow in one ;
Take honour from me, and my life is done.”

It is commonly believed and asserted that adversity is the test of friendship, and that there are very few who can stand so rigorous a test. It is undeniably true, that our misfortunes supply the best criterion by which to ascertain the stability of our friends ; but it is by no means so certain that they fall short to the extent which is popularly—we must add, morbidly—supposed. It must be recollected, that, to bear adversity with dignity is no easy task ; and that men in perplexed circumstances are too prone to sink into abject abasement on

the one hand, or to expect unreasonable and extravagant sympathy and assistance on the other. So that, if there be any perceptible change of conduct or behaviour in our friends, it has been in all probability caused by ourselves, who, in nine cases out of ten, afford in our own persons the first example of change.

It will be conceded, at the same time, that there are very few, however well disposed towards the fulfilment of the obligations of friendship, who are competent to the difficult task of helping a man through, and out of, his difficulties. The will is not so rare as that species of humanity which is the offspring jointly of fine feeling and of good taste. The former is the gift of many ; there is scarce one who succeeds in acquiring the latter.

Perhaps, in Vernon's state of mind, as indicated in the last chapter, there could not be a more unfortunate adviser and confidant than Moore, who came to visit him shortly after the departure of Mr. Sniggles.

We have, at an earlier period of our history, attributed to Mr. Moore the possession of many estimable qualities ; but much deference for the opinion of others, or tolerance for the caprice of feelings which he could not understand, or would not enter into, were certainly not among them. Moore was a man who would have his own way, and, accordingly, could not think of permitting other people to have their's ; and, unhappily, he was not seldom determined to a course of action, or a line of argument, merely because he perceived another taking a different one. It was still more unfortunate that the self-inflicted misfortunes of Vernon had imbued him with a similar obstinacy of purpose ; and, consequently, they had not talked long together, before Vernon became half-disgusted with the self-sufficiency of his friend, and Moore inwardly concluded that there was no doing any thing with so pig-headed a fellow as Vernon.

“ Well,” said Moore, “ patience, my friend ; a little while longer, and you'll see yourself at

the end of your perplexities. Have you heard anything from Elgham, yet? how goes the estate there, I wonder?"

"Sold," said Vernon, drily.

"Sold, is it?" said Moore: "that's well. Did it fetch a good price? go off well, eh?"

"So far as mere money is concerned," answered Vernon, "it went off, as you call it, very well."

"*Mere* money!" retorted Moore; "what, in Heaven's name, did you sell it for, except for *mere* money, I should be glad to be told? I wish I had rather more of that same mere money;" and he repeated the phrase with sundry varieties of accent. "But what the deuce are you making those wry faces at? if it had been knocked down for *nil*, you'd have been overjoyed, I suppose?"

"You are pleased to be jocose, Moore," said Vernon, coldly; "I am sorry I cannot participate in your mirth. The price, I tell you,

was a good one—very good ; but the purchaser, Moore—the man—the scoundrel !”

“ What of him ?” cried Moore. “ Who cares a *sous* what the purchaser is ? Let him turn the house and grounds into a lunatic establishment, if he pleases ; what is that to you ? I could recommend him a patient, I believe. Why, you must be mad, Vernon, to brood over such stuff. The man ! the scoundrel ! His money, I dare say, has virtue in it, if he has none. Who is he ?”

“ Laurence,” said Vernon, in a low whisper, leaning over the table.

“ Laurence !” cried Moore, in astonishment.

“ Yes, Laurence ! I told you what he was ; you have long known my opinion of the man ; you have long combated that opinion. You must agree with me at last ; this act proves him—displays him in his true colours—a base, low-minded villain !”

“ Upon my life, my good friend,” answered Moore, coolly, “ I really can’t see that. He

wanted the place—he has bought it ; in Heaven’s name, let him keep it. Has he paid the money ?”

“ Pshaw !” cried Vernon, contemptuously.

“ I can’t see,” resumed Moore, slightly disconcerted,—“ I can’t see precisely the cause of your anger. Let us argue the matter coolly : what interest can it be of his to purchase an estate for the purpose of insulting you ? What a means to an end !”

“ Good God ! Moore,” exclaimed Vernon, furiously, “ what a miserable begging of the question is this ! what interest ! as though men acted solely from motives of interest ; and, if they did, as though men did not often mistake their own interest. I tell you, this Laurence is a thriving—or, rather now, a thriven—adventurer, who originally ingratiated himself in my house, with the paltry intent of making as much as he could out of us. Why, he would have married my sister to secure her fortune—nothing more ; but I have baffled him there.

The rest is obvious. He takes these means of triumphing over my misfortunes: d— him, for it! But he shan't escape me yet. Here's confusion to all scoundrels, Moore," he added, with a sudden change of tone, and he filled his glass; "what say you?"

"Ditto," cried Moore, as you say in the banking-house, "ditto. But now let us change the subject. You think Laurence a rascal—I consider him an honest man; mind that!—I am still of that opinion: but, hang the fellow! it's not worth spoiling one's wine, to dispute about the virtues or vices of any man."

"Well, well, be it so," cried Vernon, moodily; "have your own way—let me reflect upon mine."

"My own way!" said Moore, setting down his glass; "now, that's precisely *your* way, Vernon; you know I'm open to conviction. I do still, and I must still, contend, that Captain Laurence, or rather, Major Laurence, for I see he is gazetted—"

At this moment a servant entered the room.

“What do you want, girl?” cried Vernon, sharply.

“A gentleman below, sir, desired me to give you this,” and she handed Vernon a card.

Vernon looked at it for a moment, and then leaning back in his chair, burst into a fit of immoderate laughter. “Look at that,” said he, tossing the card over to Moore, “look at that; the subject of your contention is below.”

“Major Laurence!” cried Moore, reading the superscription; “but where are you going?” he added suddenly, as Vernon started to his feet, and made towards the door.

“Going?” replied Vernon; “where should I be going, but to that—”

At this juncture Moore interposed, and forced his friend into a chair. “Shut the door, my dear,” he said to the servant. “Vernon,” he continued, in an under-tone, “what do you purpose doing? Laurence, you perceive, is down stairs; he *must* have some object in seek-

ing you, apart from the unreasonable motive you ascribe to him. Will you see him?"

"Oh, let us see him, by all means," replied Vernon, with a sneer, "let him be seen; we don't often behold such spectacles. These men, let me tell you, Moore, are not often to be seen betimes of a morning at the front of Newgate."

"Are you mad, or drunk?" remonstrated Moore; "the girl is in the room. What do you say? Will you see him?"

"As you please."

"Bid the gentleman walk up," said Moore, addressing the servant, and he returned to his chair. "Let me request you will be calm," he resumed, when the girl had quitted the room. "Hear what he has to say: I am sure that a short explanation will set all to rights."

"He is coming," cried Vernon, glancing towards the door. "What did you say? explain? Suppose we speak plain, that will do as well, perhaps. But I will be calm enough."

Moore watched the door with some anxiety, and immediately it opened, hastened forward, and caught Laurence by the hand. "Laurence, I am glad to see you," he exclaimed cordially; "our friend Vernon is not quite himself to-night,"—and he endued his visage with a peculiar expression, which, intending to mean a great deal, happened unfortunately to be quite inexplicable to the other.

Laurence, having returned the salutations of his friend, approached Vernon. "I am sorry, my dear Vernon," said he, "to hear that you are unwell: give me your hand; it is time that the little difference, arising from some strange misunderstanding, should have an end."

"It is time our acquaintance should have an end, Major Laurence," said Vernon, turning away from him with a look of ill-disguised contempt; "what brings you here? what fresh insult do you purpose? what new indignity am I to suffer at your hands? But, beware, sir."

“ Insult ! indignity ! ” repeated Laurence ;
“ what do you mean, Vernon ? Surely, after
what has taken place ; after the full— ”

“ Explanation you intend to make of every
thing,” interrupted Moore, coming between
them ; “ to be sure, nothing can be fairer—be
calm, Vernon. Laurence, my boy, sit down ; ”
and Moore busied himself with the decanters,
and at length pushed a glass towards Laurence.

“ Try this wine, will you ? ” said he, “ you’ll
find it capital. Vernon was always an excellent
judge of wine, eh ? ha ! ha ! ” and he coughed
like a man who endeavours to prevent two
others from speaking, or of hearing each other
if they do speak.

“ Where do you get your wine, Vernon ? ”
he added, in a tone, and with the look, of one to
whom an explicit answer would be of the last
importance.

“ This is perfectly disgusting,” exclaimed
Vernon, thrusting his glass from him. “ Major
Laurence, I ask you again, what brings you

here? Do you come to visit Mr. Moore, or me? if Mr. Moore, you can see him at his own house; if me, here I am at your service," and he took out his watch and laid it upon the table; "for five minutes—no longer."

"Good God, Vernon!" cried Laurence, impatiently, "your conduct is certainly the most extraordinary that ever came under my observation; nor have I hitherto thought I could have put up with such undeserved, such wilful and wanton misconstruction. Recollect, sir," and he reddened, as he proceeded—"there is a limit even to my forbearance."

"Forbearance!" thundered Vernon, rising suddenly, and advancing towards Laurence with clenched hands—"forbearance!"

"No quarrelling, gentlemen, I insist upon it," cried Moore, in an authoritative tone, to which the parties addressed would probably have paid little attention, but that the portly person of that gentleman, violently thrust between them, precluded the possibility of the one encountering, or even seeing the other.

“What is the meaning of all this violence, I should be glad to know?” he continued. “For shame, sir; cannot two men argue a question coolly, as I make a point of doing—an inviolable point.”

“I was wrong,” said Laurence, “and I acknowledge it. I should have been less hasty. It is, however, Mr. Vernon’s own fault, that he will not permit his friends to remember, at the moment, that he has claims upon their most considerate construction of all his actions. Vernon!” and Laurence turned towards him with an aspect of concern, “I feel for you, and with you—upon my soul I do—there is not at this moment one of your friends—not even Moore himself—who has a more disinterested regard for you than myself—there is not, upon my honour.”

During this speech, Vernon had been standing with folded arms, gazing at the other with a look of supreme scorn.

“What is that?” said he, “upon your

honour !—I believe you—the cant is worthy of, and like, you.”

“ Have I said enough ?” said Laurence, appealing to Moore. “ Vernon, but one word more. You have received a letter from me, within these few days—surely, having read it, you must not, you shall not, any longer mistake me. Some skulking scoundrel must have belied me to you.”

“ It were sorry employment to invent calumnies of you, Laurence,” retorted Vernon. “ Leave me ;—but stay—I have received a letter from you,” and he drew out his pocket-book ; “ here it is—take it, and begone.”

So saying, he flung the letter towards him.

“ Unopened,” said Laurence, in a tone of deep mortification.

“ For God’s sake, Moore, show the rascal the door, will you ?” cried Vernon, turning upon his heel. “ What the devil ! is a man’s time to be abused with such idle chatter as this.”

Laurence had been growing very pale, whilst

Vernon was yet speaking, and a violent emotion shook his entire frame. He was about to advance towards Vernon, when Moore caught him by the arm.

“What, in Heaven’s name, is the meaning of all this foolery?” he roared; “why don’t you explain? one word will do it. What are the contents of the letter? were I inclined to quarrel with you both, I should say you were a brace of the most perverse fools it was ever my misfortune to be troubled with. Explain—explain—explain.”

“I cannot now, Mr. Moore,” said Laurence, with forced calmness; “a moment’s reflection will satisfy you that I cannot—cannot. This letter,” and he placed it in his pocket, “had Mr. Vernon condescended to read it, would have told him all; nor would this unhappy—for I will call it so—this unhappy quarrel have taken place. For you, sir,” and gently removing Moore from betwixt them, he approached Vernon—“all connexion—all com-

munication—I mean, of a friendly nature—ceases between us for ever. You shall hear from me again, and soon. You may smile, sir ; but you must and *shall* open my second letter. You know the alternative ; meantime, reflect that to impute baseness to others, very frequently argues an equal degree of baseness to that which is attributed. Oh, Vernon, Vernon ! I will not permit myself to employ a stronger phrase. I *pity* you.”

So saying, and grasping Moore’s hand as he stepped past him, he hastily left the room.

A period of half an hour’s duration elapsed after the departure of Laurence, and not a syllable had been exchanged between the two friends. Vernon had sunk into a state of gloomy apathy, out of which Moore did not appear greatly disposed to rouse him. At length, silence, which was by no means Mr. Moore’s *forte*, began to be somewhat irksome ; and drawing out his snuff-box, to which he applied only on important occasions, he imbibed

a considerable pinch, and, after a short pause, delivered himself, as follows :

“ I must really tell you, Vernon, although I should be sorry to say anything that might add to your recent excitement, that your conduct towards Laurence this evening was quite unjustifiable—quite so. You must be aware, that—”

“ What ?” interrupted Vernon, abruptly.

“ I say,” continued Moore in a louder key, “ that no man of honour—no gentleman can put up with such treatment. I say further”—

“ Now, now, spare me, for God’s sake,” cried Vernon, “ the infliction of your good sense. Nay, I don’t wish to offend you, Moore ; but permit me to be the best judge of my own actions.”

“ You’re a very bad one, whether I permit you to be the best or not,” retorted Moore ; “ are you prepared to fight the man, that’s the question.”

Vernon smiled contemptuously. “ He fight !”

said he ; “ what ! that creature—that thing, who just now left us, fight ! Not he ; I could almost respect him, if the man possessed a particle of courage.”

“ By my soul, but he *will* fight,” cried Moore, decisively ; “ and I’m almost glad of it, since that appears to be the only way of recovering your good opinion. You will meet him, of course ; for I know you too well to hope that you mean to apologise.”

“ Apologise !” exclaimed Vernon ; “ my dear Moore, you do not intend to—”

“ Insult you ? no,” said the other ; “ although, I must say, that an apology, when offered—”

“ Yes, yes, I know all that,” cried Vernon ; “ I take it for granted you will act as my second in this business ;” and he laughed.

“ I don’t like it,” said Moore ; “ it’s not pleasant to act as second to a man in the wrong ; but I myself was not right to permit this quarrel to take place, and I must see you through this affair, I suppose.”

“ Captain Bouverie, sir,” said the servant, entering the room.

Vernon and Moore stared at each other for a moment, in silence.

“ Rather prompt,” said the latter, rising, and replacing his snuff-box in his pocket.—
“ Show Captain Bouverie up stairs, my dear. Shut the door.”

“ Now, Vernon,” he added, “ get you into the back room ; I shall see Bouverie myself ; he’s a fine lad, and must not be spoken to in your way. Come, get you in,” and he opened the folding door ; “ if you’re wanted, I’ll call you.”

Vernon obeyed mechanically ; for there is something in an authoritative tone and manner which frequently carries its own way with it, even against the most perverse and obstinate people.

“ Bouverie, very happy to see you, although not on the business you come about,” said Moore, as Bouverie walked into the room.

“Come this way,” and he drew him towards the fire; “you bring a message from Laurence?”

“I do,” said Bouverie; “Laurence led me to expect I should find Mr. Vernon at home.”

“He’s within,” said Moore; “but sit down, let us talk the matter over.”

“I would rather, first,” said Bouverie, “deliver this note into Mr. Vernon’s hands.”

“No,” cried Moore, grasping the arm of the other; “I bar that,” and he tapped his forehead with his finger; “do you understand? not the thing, *here*. We can settle it between us in five minutes. Give me the letter.”

“If that’s the case,” cried Bouverie, “I do not hesitate to place the note in your hands.”

Moore perused the contents hastily, and transferred the note to his pocket.

“Now—all right—very well,” said he, pondering for a few seconds; “now, Captain Bouverie, where is it to be? the ground—the spot—what do you say?”

“ I am, I confess,” said Bouverie, smiling at the other’s coolness, “ although a soldier, not so well practised in these affairs as yourself. I should say—”

“ They do not come by nature,” interrupted Moore, importantly ; “ time and experience do wonders. Well, I don’t know—where shall we say ?”

“ Chalk-farm ?” suggested Bouverie.

“ Won’t do,” cried Moore ; “ pigeon shooting there—a place for tobacco-pipes, pints of porter, and skittles—it’s very low, I assure you—never did since the barber winged the linendraper’s factotum. They warned off a sweep and a dustman a little while ago, I’m told. No, no. By the bye, I know a sweet spot just under Hampstead, where the thing can be managed comfortably. I was there once on my own account.” And he described the position of the field, and its capabilities for honourable purposes, with extraordinary minuteness.

“ It is, of course, quite immaterial to us,” said Bouverie, “ where this unpleasant business is concluded ;” and he raised his hat to depart. “ Six o’clock, you say?”

“ Precisely,” cried Moore ; “ to the minute. We shall be on the ground—good night”—and shaking Bouverie by the hand, he escorted him to the door, with a dignity which he could occasionally put on, and which, to say the truth, Mr. Moore sometimes exhibited when it was by no means necessary to do so.

It may appear strange to some of our readers, that Moore should have conducted the foregoing hostile preparations in a spirit of levity which by no means accorded with the nature of the business about to be undertaken. But it must be recollected, that Moore was perfectly a man of the world, and that, amongst the class in which he had been accustomed to move, such transactions are looked upon as inevitable, and almost necessary occurrences, which confer a certain stamp upon gentlemen of honour and

spirit: a mode of viewing such matters, which will, in all probability, continue to be popular, until some man, possessed at once of approved courage, high rank, and acknowledged weight in the great world, shall exhibit moral courage enough to discountenance and disallow the senseless and barbarous authority of custom.

It must be pleaded, also, in behalf of Moore, that he was well aware of the utter hopelessness of attempting to prevail upon Vernon to make the *amende honorable* to Laurence; an attempt which he felt, supposing Vernon's opinion of the other to be well-founded, he could not, with any decency make; and, finally, Moore, who really entertained a sincere friendship for Vernon, and was prone to believe the best of Laurence, had a strong hope that this duel would pave the way for a better understanding between both, than had, for a long time past, subsisted.

"You may come out," said he, opening the folding door; "it's all settled."

“ I know it,” replied Vernon, coming forward ; “ I could not avoid overhearing you. Where is the letter ?—there is nothing offensive in it, I hope ?”

“ Nothing,” said Moore ; “ the usual thing. Have you got your pistols with you ? Did you bring them to town ?”

“ I did.”

“ Every thing handy and convenient ?”

“ Quite.”

“ Right,” said Moore. “ By the bye, I must trouble your servant to carry a note for me to Mrs. Moore—for I shall stay with you to-night.”

Whilst Moore was writing his letter, and for a long time after he had dispatched it, Vernon sat buried in deep and abstracted reflection. It was observable, and the circumstance was not overlooked by Moore, that his face wore a totally different expression to that which had now almost become habitual to him, and that his usually nervous and unquiet movements had

subsided altogether. Deeper, perhaps better, feelings than had long possessed him, were now busy within his breast, nor had he the power or the will to discard them.

“ You seem melancholy,” said Moore, in a softer tone than usual, for he had been watching Vernon closely for some minutes. “ These matters compel a man to think——”

“ Yes,” said Vernon, shaking himself out of his stupor ; “ they do so. Melancholy ?—not at all. ’Tis growing late, Moore—you can occupy my bed : I have, of course, several things to attend to, which will probably engage me the whole night :” and he arose, and brought his writing-desk to the table.

“ I shan’t turn in to-night,” said Moore ; “ never do on such occasions. By your leave, I shall draw the sofa to the fire ;—I shan’t disturb you—be off in five minutes, fast as a church.—Give me a shake at four, will you ?”

As he said this, Moore arranged the sofa to his notions of temporary comfort, pulled off his

boots, loosened his neckcloth, laid himself at full length, and in five minutes was not only as fast as a church, but, to all appearance, as dead as a churchyard.

Vernon stood for a time listlessly gazing at his sleeping friend, and then with a short but heavy sigh turned towards his desk, and leaning his head upon his hands, relapsed into long and earnest thought.

By four o'clock, however, he had completed all that he deemed necessary to arrange; and awaking his companion, who started from his couch with all the alacrity of one accustomed to these sudden summonings, informed him that he was now in perfect readiness to accompany him.

CHAPTER VII.

“ O, this poor brain ! ten thousand shapes of fury
Are whirling there, and reason is no more.”

THE hostile message, which had been so promptly dispatched by Laurence, wrought a strange revolution in the mind and feelings of Vernon. It was not only altogether unexpected by him, but he could not help feeling also, that the entire fabric of mistake and misconception which he had raised to the prejudice of Laurence, was founded upon a belief of his pusillanimity and cowardice. He had imagined Laurence, hitherto, to be a man whose baseness was compelled to resort to the most despicable duplicity for the attainment of its ends ; and, although it is very well known to be a difficult

thing to convince a man against his will, yet it may also be said, with as much truth, that when the will concurs to the belief, conviction is always close at hand to confirm it, however outrageous and improbable the grounds for such belief may be.

Horace Vernon was a man of unquestionable, nay, of reckless courage; and like many others who possess that common commodity, he felt a proportionate degree of respect for any man who displayed it in his own person, and was weak enough, like many others, too, in this respect, to attribute to its possessor other qualities which have no necessary connexion with, or dependence on, it. He was too ready to suspect that a man of spirit could not be guilty of a mean and paltry action, and thought that cowardice not only included, but almost avowed, all imaginable baseness.

The course of life which Vernon had for some years past pursued, and the untoward position of his affairs, which was at once the

cause and the effect of it, had indisposed and almost incapacitated him from pursuing a calm and rational train or process of thought ; and it was only upon some signal or urgent occasion that he could command nerve or resolution sufficient to retrace any progress of circumstances or of feelings to its source. It is very much the custom of many men of sanguine and excitable temperament—a fault, of which Vernon partook largely—that when they are thwarted in their expectations from one portion of the world, they transfer their chagrin and mortification to another—and because they have been once deceived, with their eyes open, by those who had no interest in sparing them, voluntarily blind themselves to the friendship of others, who can derive no advantage from their misfortunes. In other words, such men having been so weak as to expect to find virtue in scoundrels, with the same weakness expect to find nothing but vice in honest men. Whilst this hallucination exists, like Timon of Athens,

“all is oblique” with these persons; and the difficulty of proving to them that any sincerity or honour remains in the world, is all the greater when you endeavour to show that their own friends possess a particle of the one or the other.

The liability of being suddenly dismissed to another world, is, however, sufficient, probably, to compel most men to set themselves seriously down to reflect upon the reasons which may have precipitated them upon this contingency. And when Vernon, having made such a disposition of his affairs as present circumstances rendered it imperative upon him to arrange, with as much calmness and self-possession as he could muster,—when he came to reflect upon his quarrel with Laurence, upon the causes which had brought it about, upon the original motive of his animosity towards him, he could not conceal from himself that there was positively nothing (except his own wayward and unworthy surmises) which could be urged as a

plea for the conduct he had with such obstinate consistency pursued. The scales fell from his eyes, and he now perceived that, whatever might be the event of the duel then pending, when every thing came to be known, he would be stigmatized either as a captious and quarrelsome fire-eater, eager for any pretext to quarrel with his friends; or, which was far more galling, ridiculed for a senseless and ill-conditioned blockhead, who had altogether mistaken his relative position in society, and had ignorantly gone out of his way to insult a man equal in every respect to himself. It may be imagined, therefore, that when Moore sprang from the sofa, and began to apply himself to the business of the morning, he found his friend in no very enviable state of mind and temper,—a moral condition to which Moore paid little heed, that gentleman having experienced so much of it as, by this time, perfectly to have ascertained the amount of attention or respect to which it was properly entitled.

It was an axiom with Moore, that no man should go forth upon such expeditions as they were about to engage in, or, indeed, encounter the chill air of early morning upon any pretext whatever, until he had inwardly fortified himself with coffee and a caulker of brandy. Accordingly, he descended into the kitchen with, apparently, an instinctive knowledge of its several localities, from whence he presently emerged with coals, wood, a coffee-pot, and the other indispensables.

“I am a hand at these things, you see,” said he, as, in a few minutes, a pot of coffee was placed upon the table. “It is, I take it, one of the most important duties a man has to learn, to conduct these matters through every stage with perfect propriety. Let me see your pistols.”

He examined them with great minuteness, and after a prolonged scrutiny, declaring them unexceptionable, drank his coffee, helped himself at the sideboard to a large glass of brandy,

a duplicate of which he handed to Vernon ; and putting on his hat and gloves, signified that he was in a becoming state of readiness.

Vernon was not slow to prepare himself to accompany him. The state of suspense and inquietude in which a man necessarily finds himself, between the acting and the completion of the duties exacted by modern honour, was becoming intolerable to him. He, however, previously to his setting forth, doubled the dose of brandy Moore had prescribed for him.

They walked on for a considerable distance without speaking, Moore slightly taking the lead, and humming as much of a martial air, as his ear, by no means an acquisitive one, had been enabled to retain.

“ Moore,” said Vernon, at length, “ I have been engaged, during the night, in settling my affairs. If anything should happen to me in this business——”

“ You should never advert to contingencies,” said Moore, “ unless you wish them to take

place. Mum's the word to misfortune. She should always make her call without invitation. It's all very well to whistle for a wind, but I never do it, lest it should be an ill one."

"I beg your pardon," remonstrated Vernon, "it is quite proper that these things should be spoken about. Here—take the key of my writing-desk ; you will find a letter there addressed to yourself, in which two others are enclosed for my sisters. You will perceive, should there be any necessity for your opening it, that I have made a heavy claim upon your friendship, which I have had reason to believe sincere."

"I think you have had reason so to believe," exclaimed Moore ; "and you may believe it, whether you have or not. You may rely upon me, if—oh ! but this is absurd—" and he began to whistle. "Come along."

Vernon grasped his offered hand, which was extended to him sideways as they proceeded, and a long silence ensued. A turning in the road caused Moore to project his head explo-

ringly. "Here we are at last," he said, taking out his watch, "and in excellent time too. The back of the field yonder, which you may just see behind that cluster of houses, is the spot I have pitched upon for you. You couldn't get better ground, I'll venture to say, within the precincts of Mogg."

"Wait a moment," said Vernon, taking him by the arm, "one moment—I wish to speak to you," and he placed himself opposite to Moore, and looked at him earnestly.

"I fancy, Moore, you consider me a man of courage?"

"Who doubts it?" cried Moore, in surprise at this unexpected question, and at so extraordinary a time.

"I think, Moore," resumed Vernon, "you know that I am no coward?"

"By my soul, I do!" said Moore, "and *you* know, I suppose, that I am not accustomed to go out with poltroons. By the Lord! I should think the final employment commonly assigned

to spinsters, of leading apes to the lower regions, a more honourable one than that of lugging cowards to Hampstead at six o'clock in the morning. But what do you mean? I don't understand your drift?"

"By G—, Moore," replied Vernon, "I have a presentiment which I cannot shake off—a presentiment——"

"That you'll be shot?" inquired Moore, rather coldly.

"No—no—not that:—what if I were? but of some impending calamity—some——"

"Oh! confound your presentiments," cried Moore; "hark! I hear the rumble of wheels; there they are, by Jove, just getting out of Laurence's cab, on the other side of the field," and he seized him by the arm, and lugged him forward; "this is no time for presentiments—I had a presentiment, when a boy, that I should be made a lord long ere this—and here I am, a plain commoner still."

"It must be so: I cannot avert it, if it be

fate," muttered Vernon, as with hasty steps they advanced towards the field.

"No ;—no averting fate, as you say," cried Moore, vaulting over the stile ; "like the rest of the female sex, she will have her own way. Stand here," he added, as they approached within a few paces of Laurence and Bouverie, "whilst I pay my respects to these gentlemen."

Moore walked forward for that purpose, raising his hat, as he drew near, with a politeness which is held to be indispensably necessary on such occasions. A short consultation ensued between himself and Bouverie, whilst Laurence and Vernon stood facing each other, without the slightest sign of recognition.

Certain necessary preliminaries having been arranged, the two seconds placed their principals, and without delay handed a pistol to each.

"When I say, 'Fire !'" cried Moore in a loud voice—and he waited a few moments.—"Fire !"

Immediately on the report of the pistols, the seconds advanced. "No great harm done,"

said Moore—and now Bouverie approached. The two conferred together for a short time, and separated.

“Laurence demands a second shot,” said Moore gravely ; “I am sorry for that.”

“Why ?” said Vernon abruptly—and his face, which was pale before, became almost wan, and his lips expanded with a rigid smile : “why sorry, Moore ? hand me that pistol,” and he held out his left hand, and taking it from Moore, leisurely placed the finger of his other hand upon the trigger, gazing, or rather staring at Laurence, at the same time, with a cold and almost baneful eye. “Retire,” said he, “and give the signal. He is, I perceive, ready.”

“Fire !” cried Moore again. Before, however, the seconds could well advance, Vernon having discharged his pistol, flung it violently into the air, and Laurence, staggering back a few paces, raised his hand to his breast, and fell heavily to the ground.

“He’s hit, by heaven !” cried Moore, running

towards the wounded man, whose head Bouverie had raised upon his knee :—"where is it, Bouverie ; not serious, I hope ;—where is it, my dear boy ?" and he helped to raise Laurence to his feet.

"He cannot stand," said Bouverie, in a tone of deep concern ; "I fear he's wounded dangerously—what's to be done ?"

Here Laurence groaned heavily.

"Can he speak, do you think ?" whispered Bouverie.

"Yes—yes," he gasped. "Tell Vernon not to leave me—I have something to say to him—particular—important," and opening his eyes, he recognised Moore, and laid his hand upon his arm :—"keep him, will you ?"

Moore said nothing, but arose from his side, and went in quest of Vernon, whom he found in the high road, pacing to and fro distractedly, with his hands clenched before him.

"Come with me," said Moore, touching him on the shoulder ; "Laurence is hurt seriously,

and wishes to see you—he has something to communicate.”

“Seriously?” said Vernon, in a hollow voice :
“yes, he’ll die—he’s dying—I have killed him
—I know that——”

“However,” cried the other, “not so bad as that, I hope.”

“We should exchange forgiveness with the dying, should’nt we, Moore?” said Vernon vaguely.

“Yes, and with the living too,” answered Moore, taking his arm, and leading him into the field ; “if you had done that, this cursed mischance would not have happened ; but, never mind, it can’t be helped now.”

“My God !” cried Bouverie, greatly distressed, as they approached, “he has fainted. He’ll die before any assistance can be procured.”

“Yes—yes—yes—he’ll die,” cried Vernon wildly : “I told Moore so, but he wouldn’t believe me.”

“Hold your tongue, and be d——d,” bellowed

Moore: "here come three or four fellows;—here I say;" and he ran towards them, and returned shortly. "I have dispatched them," said he, "for something on which to carry him to the public house hard by. We'll have a doctor to him in a few minutes."

The men presently returned, bearing a hurdle, on which Laurence was carefully placed, and the party slowly proceeded towards the Nag's Head, just as the landlord was issuing forth to inhale the morning air.

The host of the Nag's Head, whose name was Hammond, unlike too many members of the victuallers' fraternity, who hang forth—

"—— a flag and sign of love
Which is, indeed, but sign——"

and would fain that the community at large should live, like woodcocks, upon suction;—Hammond, we say, was a man who could exercise kindness and attention to others, even when his interest was not likely to be much advanced by his doing so; or rather, in cases where his good

offices were required, was apt to discard all remembrance of his own interest from his mind. Having been apprized, then, of the circumstances of the present case, he lost no time in sending his boy for Mr. Rennie, the surgeon, whilst his wife, with equal alacrity, prepared a chamber for Laurence, into which he was forthwith carried.

The breakfast which Moore now ordered was, as the reader may easily conceive, a matter more of form than of necessity. Moore was really deeply concerned at the issue of this unfortunate event, and although he endeavoured from time to time to put a good face upon the matter, and to assure Vernon that all would yet end well, he still had too good reason to believe that the wound which Laurence had received was mortal. Vernon, on the other hand, after the first excitement had past over, consequent upon the melancholy result of the duel, in accordance with his sanguine nature, was hoping and momentarily expecting tidings of Laurence's safety ;

and yet, at the same time, there was just sufficient doubt of it to render his situation far from easy. Vernon was a man of the most generous nature, and yet of the most unjust suspicions—a result which a commerce with mankind frequently induces; and we believe it to be a condition of human nature, that a man cannot associate with any class of human beings without partaking in some degree, more or less, of its peculiar characteristics.

Breakfast was scarcely on the table, before Bouverie made his appearance; Moore hastened to meet him.

“How is he now?” said he, “what says the doctor? better, I hope.”

“I fear,” said Bouverie mournfully, “that he’s in a very bad way. He tells me, Moore,” he continued earnestly; “that you are his friend; he wishes you to remain with him, and when he has strength to do so,” and he glanced towards Vernon, “he desires to speak to him. I am going to Brighton upon as trying

an occasion, God knows, as ever man was called upon to undertake. You will see to him ; you will take care of him."

" I will — I will," said Moore, the tears streaming from his eyes ; " God bless you, my dear boy !" and Mr. Moore, not deeming the evidence of such womanly weakness, as it is called, to be honourable to him, withdrew from the room.

Moore returned in about half-an-hour. " Vernon," said he, and he beckoned to him, and he came towards him, as though previously prepared for the summons — " Laurence wishes to see you ; to take his leave of you ; to exchange forgiveness with you," and he pressed his arm ; " do not be mistaken," he added, " the doctor says that there is no hope for him — he is dying ; — will you accompany me ?"

" I will," answered Vernon with strange calmness. They ascended the stairs, and entered a back room. The eyes of Laurence were closed, as though in sleep, when they entered, but he

opened them on their approach, and motioned them to draw near.

“Moore,” said he languidly, “I know you will do me the favour to leave Vernon and myself together, for a few minutes.”

“To be sure I will,” said Moore, making towards the door; “but remember what the doctor says; don’t excite yourself, do you hear?” and he withdrew to an adjoining apartment.

“Vernon,” resumed Laurence, “take this chair by my side, for I have but little breath left; and that, the doctor said,” he added with a faint smile, “I must make go as far as I can. Oh! Vernon,” he added sorrowfully, after a pause, and he took his hand between his own; “I have something to tell you which I know will—” and he hesitated, “excite you; for you are not prepared for it; promise me that you will bear what I have to say with resignation—with fortitude.”

Vernon did not answer for some time. “I

fear, Laurence," he said at length—"I might almost say I hope—that I have done you some injustice—" and he pressed his clasped hand ; —"if I have, I wish you to forgive me."

"Pride," answered Laurence, "false pride leads us to do many weak things ; I was foolish to demand a second shot—but I knew you, Vernon—it was the only hope left to me, that you would understand me. Horace Vernon," he continued more solemnly, "you *have* done me an injustice. I knew your distress—your embarrassments—and I would have done every thing to lighten them ; to the last farthing I have, I would have done so, but you would not permit me ; you would still mistake me."

Vernon was about to speak.

"Hear me," cried Laurence, "while I have yet power to speak,—nay, be calm, for I must say it. Oh ! that you had read my letter to you. I bought your estate at Egham with no unworthy, unfriendly or insulting intention, as you, I know, believed."

“Why did you leave this till now?” said Vernon between his teeth; “why have you betrayed me into this? Was it not enough to me, *to me*, that you should have said as much? Oh! Laurence,” and he laid his hands upon his shoulders; “if you have been the cause of losing me altogether;—if to my other crimes that of murder is to be added;—if I am to be *sold* to hell—”

He paused, for Laurence had sunk back upon his pillow; he raised his hand faintly: “Be calm, I implore you,” he said, after a long pause:—“Horace Vernon, I have something yet to tell you, which must be said at once. Leave me, then, and see me once more—when I am dead. When I am dead,” he repeated, “your sister Charlotte will be a widow.”

“How?” cried Vernon wildly.

“She is my wife—your sister is my wife.”

A loud cry, a shriek burst from Vernon’s lips, as he dropt upon the ground, as one sud-

denly struck by lightning, which caused Moore to burst into the room, followed by the inmates of the house. Moore was the first to hasten to his assistance.

“ I thought it would be so,” said Laurence ; “ I knew it was a mistake, a wretched mistake ; never—never—with all his faults, lived a nobler being than Horace Vernon.”

Moore was too much busied with his friend to hear this speech, but, calling the landlord to his aid, with some difficulty he raised Vernon from the floor, and carried him into another room.

“ Leave us, my good friends,” said Moore, addressing the people of the house, when they had placed Vernon in a chair ; “ he will recover sooner with me, than with strangers. Hammond, bring up a bottle of wine, come—quick’s the word ;”—and Moore instantaneously cleared the apartment.

“ What the deuce is the matter with you, my dear fellow,” said he, and he shook him by

the hand, and called him by his name. "Upon my soul," he continued, soliloquizing, "I've got myself into a pretty business; what the plague Mrs. Moore imagines at this moment, I am at a loss to conceive, and hardly dare guess; she's as nervous as a cat, and d—n me, almost as—" Here, as though that train of reflection were likely to be neither profitable nor pleasant, he applied more vigorously to the shoulder of his friend:—"Vernon! Vernon!"

Vernon raised his eyes vacantly to the face of Moore, and passed his hand across his forehead, as if endeavouring to recal some indistinct memory. "Where am I? What's the matter?" a heavy sigh escaped him, and he sunk back again in a state of stupor.

There was a gentle knock at the door, Moore went to it, and admitted Hammond, who entered with the bottle of wine.

"Dr. Rennie, sir," said the host, "particularly wishes to see you; he is waiting in the passage."

“ My dear sir,” said the surgeon, as Moore stepped out of the room to speak to him ; “ I think it my duty to tell you, that your friend, in the next room, is in a very bad way.”

“ God bless me,” cried Moore, in sad perplexity ; “ I’m very sorry to hear that ; I fear doctor,” he added, “ we have another patient for you, in here ;” and he pointed over his shoulder ; “ but what do you mean by his being in a bad way ? you gentlemen—”

“ He cannot recover, sir,” answered the doctor gravely ; “ he will die, sir ; since I extracted the ball, his strength has appeared to decline greatly, and he is now in a high state of fever ; it is probably unnecessary to inquire whether his friends have been sent for.”

“ They have, doctor : Captain Bouverie left this house two hours ago, for that purpose.”

“ Allow me to ask, sir,” pursued the doctor, “ whether they live at any considerable distance from this ; it is of all things important that his wife should be made aware——”

“He’s not married, that one’s consolation ;— a bachelor, Mr. Rennie.”

“How ?” cried the other, “not married ; you are mistaken, I fear. The poor gentleman has been raving, talking incoherently about his wife ; he calls her Charlotte ; and he speaks frequently of one Miss Vernon.”

Moore dashed his fist to his forehead. “Oh, God ! I see it all now ; infernal fool ! ass ! madman !” and he directed a glance towards Vernon ; “let me see him, for Heaven’s sake—” and he thrust the doctor towards the room in which Laurence lay :—“Oh, my dear sir, you must save him ; you must, by Heaven you *must* ; I would not for all the world—for all the world, doctor, that this should end fatally.”

The good woman of the house was in attendance upon Laurence, and arose on their entrance. Moore sat down in the vacant chair, and taking the hand of Laurence, grasped it warmly. “My good fellow,” said he, “why didn’t you speak out last night ? you knew that

madman in the next room—but he *has* had many things,” he continued in a milder tone, “he has had many things to vex and harass him. Oh, this cursed folly, which men call pride.”

“True, true,” said Laurence faintly. “Oh Moore, if—”

“Don’t speak about it,” cried Moore; “how do you feel yourself now?”

“As one who has nearly done with this world,” cried Laurence; “but pardon me, permit me to tell you all;” and at some length, and with considerable difficulty, he related what the reader has already been apprised of, taking a great portion of the blame to himself, and mitigating, as far as possible, the conduct of Vernon throughout.

“You’re a noble fellow, Laurence—by my soul you are,” cried Moore, when he had concluded, and he arose, and walked to the window, taking out his handkerchief. “I wonder,” he added in an under tone, “how long it is since I was caught snivelling, before,” and he

examined the landscape for some time, with rueful, but not very clear-sighted earnestness.

“Where is Vernon!” said Laurence, faintly.

“Oh, hang him!—don’t care about him,” cried Moore, savagely: “he’s in the next room, bewailing his cursed misdeeds, I suppose—which he calls fate—his common practice.”

“Go to him,” urged Laurence; “he requires a friend by him at this time, I know. Hark! I hear him walking about the room.”

“By the Lord, he does need somebody with him,” said Moore, suddenly recollecting himself; “he’ll be drinking the wine, and playing his mad pranks, and we shall have the devil to pay, and no one to take the reckoning.” And so saying, he hastened from the room.

As Moore opened the door, he just caught a glimpse of Vernon’s ghastly countenance reflected in the looking-glass, before which he was standing; for Vernon, hearing the step of some one approaching, sprang quickly round, and dropt something from his hand. His cra-

vat had been torn from his neck, and lay upon the fender; and Moore perceived that it was a penknife which had that moment fallen.

He darted forward, and seized Vernon by the wrists. “Good heavens! Vernon!” he exclaimed, in alarm, “what is this?—what were you about to do?”

Vernon stared at him with glassy eyes, and gnashed his teeth—struggling violently to disengage himself from the hold of the other.

“Be calm, I implore you—I insist,” cried Moore; and he held him firmly for a moment. “What!—don’t you know your old friend?—don’t you know me?”

“Yes—I do,” cried Vernon, breaking violently away from him, and seizing him by the collar; “you are Livingstone.—I will have your heart’s blood, Livingstone—I will—I will—I will——”

The doctor, the landlord, and several others, now burst into the room, each endeavouring, by some ingenious process of his own, effectually

to secure Vernon; a subtlety of contrivance which had nearly proved fatal to Moore—since, before they had succeeded in effectually withholding Vernon, he had dashed the other to the ground, and was attempting to strangle him.

“What’s to be done with this man?” said Moore to the doctor, when he had risen, and had recovered a portion of breath.

“I have sent for two men accustomed to these matters,” answered the doctor. “He is raving mad. This is a deplorable case. Mercy on us! his shrieks will alarm the neighbourhood.”

“Go to Major Laurence,” urged Moore, “and make the best of this melancholy occurrence. I’ll see to my friend. This is what comes of taking care of one’s honour, doctor:—this is *satisfaction*.”

In about two hours, a coach was brought to the door—into which Vernon, between two strong men, was with some difficulty thrust—and, accompanied by Moore, they drove to his lodgings, in Jermyn-street.

CHAPTER VIII

“ I will go seek her ;
She shall not, from my unweigh'd idleness,
Bear slander further.”

THE breakfast things were cleared away at an early hour at Mr. Hopwood's, as was usual at that well regulated establishment, and the respectable head, after carefully wiping the dust from his glasses, had seated himself to the serious perusal of the “ Morning Herald.” Georgina was apparently studying an Italian lesson, for she expected her master that morning ; but it might be observed, from her listless manner, that her thoughts were otherwise occupied ; and Mrs. Hopwood was too busily

engaged to notice such a circumstance, for she was criticizing Dr. Kitchener's receipt for a cheap Irish stew, an esteemed dish with her for the kitchen, "because," as she observed, "nothing was wasted."

Indeed, Georgina had of late appeared an altered girl. Her taste for coquetry and playfulness seemed to have given way to a more subdued demeanour; her countenance was marked by a more thoughtful expression than heretofore, and it might be evident to a very partial observer, that some secret, though powerful agent, had worked such a change in her manner and feelings. She held the pen in her hand, and her eyes were fixed on the book, but not a leaf did she turn, and the paper remained unstained by the ink.

"Good God! what a shocking affair!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Hopwood, lowering the newspaper, and looking around him. Both ladies were aroused to inquiry, as they met the really alarmed gaze of their respected relative.

“My dear Mr. Hopwood ! what can have happened ?” ejaculated his astonished wife ; “ nothing to—to—Lord Walgrave, I hope.”

“ No, no, thank God ! but Mr. Bouverie—Captain I should—” but Mr. Hopwood’s further explanation was stopped by the alarming appearance of his daughter ; for no sooner did he mention the name than the pen fell from her hand, her face became ashy pale, and had it not been for the prompt assistance rendered by her alarmed parents, she would assuredly have fallen to the floor.

“ Georgina ! my child ! what ails you, my love ?” cried the anxious father.

“ Did you say, Mr. Bouverie ?” she uttered in a voice scarcely audible. “ Did you say some accident ?” and the most intense anxiety was visible on her countenance.

“ Accident ! my love ! no, no, not to him—nor is anything the matter with him that I know,” Mr. Hopwood hastily replied. “ But your feelings are too susceptible, my love.”

“ You must indeed be cautious what you read from the newspaper, Mr. Hopwood,” urged Mrs. Hopwood ; “ our poor child cannot bear such attacks upon her sensibilities.”

“ I am quite well now, mamma,” returned Georgina ; “ it was merely the sudden feeling : I thought that—that—”

“ Well, but, my love,” gently remonstrated the father, “ you really should not allow such things to affect you so powerfully—supposing that any accident *had* happened to Mr.—I should say Captain Bouverie—you have seen him but twice and—”

“ My dear, Georgina is not very well,” interposed Mrs. Hopwood ; “ and she must not be spoken to.” For Mrs. Hopwood had observed the variation of colour upon her daughter’s cheek during this brief colloquy, and she was endowed with a sufficient degree of the quickness of genuine perception to guess at the state of Georgina’s feelings, though the idea had never struck her before ; for since Mr. Bou-

verie's departure from Egham, his name had scarcely ever been mentioned, unless, perhaps, Hopwood might occasionally have hazarded a conjecture respecting his sudden coming, and equally sudden departure, and the state of mystification into which he had thrown them.

When Hopwood was betrayed into the sudden exclamation by the paragraph in the newspaper, which indeed was no other than an account of the duel, his curiosity was as vividly excited by the appearance of the name of Bouverie in conjunction with those he so well knew, as his feelings were concerned in the result. Captain Bouverie's intimate knowledge of the parties, served at once to explain to him all that appeared inconsistent in his residence at Egham, and fixed his situation in society without further speculation. Of course he never doubted the identity of Mr. Bouverie of Egham, and of the Captain Bouverie mentioned in the paragraph. Hopwood had fully described to his wife his accidental meeting

with Mr. Bouverie, subsequent to the dinner, and the result of that meeting, at which he had felt it so much his duty to set that gentleman right, with respect to the real character of the connexion he had so unwarily formed. Georgina had partially learnt these facts through the communicative Susan, who had informed her of the departure of Agnes, no one knew whither ; of the equivocal character of her mother ; and of the total alienation of Mr. Bouverie from Agnes, by means of some representations made by her father.

Now the conscience of Georgina told her plainly, that the only circumstance which her father could relate to the disparagement of Agnes, was one in which she had been herself the heroine ; and she little thought that so foolish an *escapade* would ever have had such unpleasant consequences. Her high feeling likewise revolted at the notion of her imprudence being shielded at the expense of another's reputation, and that, too, of her early friend,

whom she began to love the more, as she knew her wronged, and fancied her suffering.

The admiration, or rather regard, she had conceived for Mr. Bouverie, ardent and strong as it was, in one of her age and peculiar turn of mind, nevertheless yielded to a high sense of honour and justice; and, conceiving herself to be the sole cause of his estrangement from Agnes, she would gladly, were it in her power, have undeceived him. To Mr. Bouverie, therefore, she would not have scrupled to confess the truth, although the avowal would cost her all she really held dear—his good opinion; for she could not now hope for a stronger feeling. But to her father, she dared not speak of it; he was, perhaps, the only one to whom she shrunk from so humiliating a confession.

It was these thoughts which preyed upon the mind of Georgina, and made her listless and inattentive to what was passing around her; it was the result of a determined struggle against a hopeless passion, and a sense of the reparation she owed to Agnes, for the wrong she had so

unwittingly caused her, that made her thus thoughtful and dejected.

“But, my dear,” resumed Mrs. Hopwood, her curiosity reviving as her daughter’s equanimity was restored; “you did not say what had occurred?”

“A melancholy event indeed!” said Hopwood with feeling; “Captain Laurence, Major, I should say, poor gentleman! has lost his life in a duel with our late neighbour, Mr. Vernon.”

He was interrupted by a natural exclamation of surprise and sorrow from both ladies.

“And I see by the paper that Mr.—I should say Captain Bouverie, after all, is a brother officer of poor Major Laurence, and acted as his second in the unhappy affair. Both officers were only gazetted to their rank a short time before. The misunderstanding originated in some unfortunate mistake; what with recent misfortunes, and this fatal affray, Mr. Vernon’s mind has given way—dear me! dear me!”

“How very shocking!” exclaimed Mrs. Hopwood.

Georgina's eyes filled with tears.

“Why, it has been understood for some time that the Major was actually married to Miss Charlotte Vernon,” said Mrs. Hopwood.

“I know he bought the estate here, intending to present it to Mr. Vernon,” observed Mr. Hopwood; “Robinson hinted as much to me after the sale. But, I suppose the party most interested has been the last to learn these things. Sad thing—sad thing—hasty man, Mr. Vernon—always was.”

“The Vernons have always been a proud family,” said Mrs. Hopwood; “they never visited in the neighbourhood.”

“But mamma,” interposed Georgina, “remember the ill health of poor Mrs. Vernon for so long a time, and poor Mr. Vernon continually from home.”

“Yes, my love, I know all that,” said Mrs. Hopwood; “and I know the Egham people are very disagreeable people to visit; but I *do* think your papa's station in life *might* have been con-

sidered not so *very* inferior as—as—” and she cast an inquiring glance towards her intelligent helpmate.

“Why, my dear, Lord Walgrave does not think so,” answered Mr. Hopwood to his wife’s silent interrogatory; “and what is past, is past; but I’m sure I’m sorry for their misfortunes, very sorry.”

“And no one can be more sorry than I am,” repeated Mrs. Hopwood; who, after having relieved her heart from the little load of indignation which had sat heavily there for many a day, sincerely pitied the family, with all the feeling natural to a kind-hearted woman. “Poor Mr. Vernon! he is a kind, generous hearted man; many is the good deed he has done hereabouts; and I’ve no doubt all this could be traced to that artful hussey.”

“My love!” said Hopwood sharply, and casting a warning glance from his wife towards his daughter, he uttered some words in an under tone, amongst which, “ears of innocence” were alone intelligible.

“ Well, well,” continued Mrs. Hopwood, her feelings for once getting the better of the *system* ; “ I wish I had known what I know now ; it is a thousand pities that such creatures—”

“ My *dear* love !” cried Hopwood almost in consternation—“ pray remember !”

Mrs. Hopwood applied her handkerchief to her eyes two or three times in quick succession, and then, as if afraid to trust her feelings on a subject she knew to be dangerous, suddenly took up her cookery book, and quitted the room.

Mr. Hopwood resumed the perusal of his newspaper, and Georgina again dipped her pen into the ink, but it was mechanically ; for if her thoughts before were too absorbing to allow her to devote a proper attention to her studies, the difficulty was now increased. Her feelings were powerfully excited by what she had just heard. The Vernon family merited her warmest sympathy, and above all, she had learned, what

she had almost despaired of ever being made acquainted with—Mr. Bouverie's real position in society. Neither did Mr. Hopwood find himself much interested in his employment; but folding his spectacles, and replacing the paper on the table, he sat for some few minutes in a musing posture.

“My love!” he observed to Georgina; “I don't think you have been in good spirits lately. I am afraid you have been too much within. But you must rally, my love; we shall shortly have a visitor.”

This announcement the good gentleman expected would have roused the curiosity of his daughter to a point of eager inquiry; but Georgina answered vaguely.

“Why, my child, won't you guess who our visitor is to be?” said her father.

“Indeed, I cannot, papa!” answered Georgina, without the smallest apparent interest.

“Why, you puss! our friend, Lord Walgrave,” returned her parent, in a tone intended

to be joyful, but somewhat subdued by Georgina's evident reserve.

“ Yes, my love; Lord Walgrave is about to honour us with a visit; it may be a week; it may be a fortnight; but we are sure to see him. I dined with his lordship yesterday. Georgina, my child! you are a happy girl; a fortunate girl!”

Georgina sighed deeply.

“ For—I believe I may say so,” continued Hopwood, too much engrossed with his subject, to heed Georgina's manner—“ Lord Walgrave, my love, admires you; he admires the system in which you have been brought up; he respects me and your mamma; and indeed, my child, it is time that you should be made acquainted with the honour he intends you; he has solicited me the permission to visit constantly at our house, and solely, my Georgina, on your account—solely on your account. It makes your old father happy, my Georgina, to think that his child has sufficient qualities to

merit the attention,—the serious attention, I may say, of a nobleman of such rank ; but on looking directly at Georgina, he saw with infinite surprise, that she by no means corresponded with his enthusiasm.

“ You do not speak, Georgina. Are you not happy in such vast prospects ? does it not delight you to see your father happy ? Happy that the object of his life is accomplished.”

“ Accomplished, papa, in what manner ?” said Georgina, inquiringly.

“ In what manner ? my love,” repeated her father in a sharp tone. “ Why do you ask such a question ? Have you not understood me ? The object of my life has been your happiness, and that I trust will shortly be accomplished. Lord Walgrave, my love, after the due consideration, which so important a subject requires, has finally made up his mind to solicit the honour—those were his very words, my love—the honour of your hand ! *yours*, my love ; the hand of *my* Georgina ; my child ;

Viscountess Walgrave ! and future head of the noble family of Lexington ! Think of that, my child. Does not the contemplation of so much greatness, so unexpected, astonish — bewilder you ?”

To have seen Georgina’s countenance at that moment, one might have supposed that such offers were matters of every day occurrence with her ; for although, perhaps, a little paler than usual, it betrayed no emotion whatever.

“ Well, child ! you don’t speak. It is I, your father, to whom you owe all this : you don’t speak : you don’t acknowledge your satisfaction ; your delight !” and he looked at his daughter with earnest inquiry.

“ I should be guilty of great deceit, papa,” replied Georgina, “ if I could lead you to believe that Lord Walgrave’s offer gave me any satisfaction : but, on the contrary, it gives me great uneasiness, for I am quite sure I never could be happy as Lord Walgrave’s wife.”

These words were spoken in so calm and decided a tone, that Hopwood looked her full in the face, to see whether the expression corresponded with the sentiment expressed ;— and then, as though suddenly struck with an exceedingly comic notion, he flung himself back in his arm chair, and laughed hysterically.

“ Can never be happy ! ha ! ha ! ha ! Great uneasiness ! ha ! ha ! Capital—excellent.” But turning sharply to Georgina, his mirth as suddenly ceased, as though he had seen his own name in the bankrupt list ; for not the slightest corresponding pleasantry could be traced on her perfectly calm countenance.

“ Well, what is the girl looking at ? why doesn't she speak ?” exclaimed Hopwood, vehemently. “ Will you break your father's heart ? But come, my child,” he said, suddenly altering his voice, and patting his hand affectionately on her curling tresses ; “ say you are joking with me ; I will forgive you, I will indeed ; tell me

so, Georgina ; I know you will." And the old man looked as if his life hung upon her lips.

"Ah ! why will you force me to say so much," said Georgina, sensibly affected. "Indeed, indeed papa, I cannot marry Lord Walgrave—I cannot respect him—I cannot love him?"

The eyes of the father were fixed upon his child, with an incredulous, bewildered expression of doubt and astonishment ; but his usually serene face became gradually altered by passion.

"And you dare to say this to your father," he at length broke forth ; "to your father, who has toiled for you day and night—whose sole care has been your happiness—who has amassed wealth only for you alone !—ungrateful !"

"Why seek to marry me at all?" interposed Georgina. "Are we not happy at home? But to wed me to one who I cannot respect——"

"Not respect Lord Walgrave!" exclaimed Hopwood. "Did any one ever hear the like?"

a nobleman of the highest rank ! Girl—girl, you will drive me mad. But you *shall* have him : you *shall* respect him : you shan't have an opinion about the matter. Out of my sight, hussey ! out of my sight."

"What is all this ?" exclaimed Mrs. Hopwood, who at that moment opened the door, attracted by the excited tone of her husband's voice. "Mr. Hopwood, what on earth is the matter ?"

"The matter, my dear !—enough's the matter !" answered Hopwood, somewhat lowering his tone. "This girl will drive me crazy. She says she cannot respect Lord Walgrave, and will not have him—not have Lord Walgrave !—ha ! ha !—a nobleman of the highest rank ! Why, my dear, you know it's all settled. It would break my heart—it would—" and Mr. Hopwood sunk back into his chair, apparently exhausted by his conflicting feelings.

"Mr. Hopwood, you have done very wrong to speak to the child in the manner you have,"

said Mrs. Hopwood, in a very serious tone, observing the agitation of Georgina—"very wrong, indeed: the poor child is not well; I'm sure she is not, and cannot bear it. Come to your mother, my love—compose yourself—never mind;" and the kind parent gently drew her within her embrace, as though she had been still an infant.

Georgina, quite overcome by maternal tenderness, threw herself upon her mother's neck, and burst into a passion of tears. It was the first disagreement she had ever had with her father; and although she had, in her own mind, long before determined to resist any despotic exercise of authority, yet it was not without a severe inward struggle that she could overcome her long habits of submission to parental dictation. Her resistance, in this instance, however, might have been merely the result of a girlish feeling, on a subject in which, of all others, she felt a right to an independent opinion; but that feeling of independence was defined and

strengthened by her acquaintance with Captain Bouverie; in comparison with whom, Lord Walgrave held a very slender place in her estimation. Her generous nature, however, was not proof against her mother's kindness, and she relieved her bursting heart on the maternal bosom.

“ Mr. Hopwood, I am quite astonished that you should have spoken to the poor child in this manner,” said Mrs. Hopwood severely; alternately kissing Georgina's cheek, and drying her eyes. “ You ought to have left it to me. Who so proper as a mother? You ought to be ashamed, Mr. Hopwood.” And the good lady's voice faltered, as though she could have wept with her daughter,—so sympathetic are tears in female eyes.

Hopwood rose from his chair, and sat down again, and fidgetted about, not knowing whether to assert his authority, in spite of wife and daughter, or to temporize. But the sight of tears had a strange effect upon the old gentle-

man's feelings ; and, fearful of giving way, he hurried out of the room.

“ There, dry your eyes, my child,” said her mother, tenderly ; “ think no more about it. It is true, your papa has framed this match with the best intentions ; but he is too abrupt, and you are not well, Georgina ; I'm sure you are not. Tell me, my love, has any thing vexed you, that your mother does not know ?”

“ Mamma, I am unhappy—very unhappy,” said Georgina, almost inarticulately.

“ Well, but, my love, only think what a match Lord Walgrave is,” said Mrs. Hopwood, supposing that her daughter alluded to her father's communication : “ such manners—such a rank—and so *very* amiable. Only think of that, Georgina.”

“ But remember what the major said of him, mamma,” said Georgina, rallying somewhat ; “ and then, how shocking to marry a man who only cares for money !”

“ My dear, we have every reason to believe that Lord Walgrave has entirely altered,” said

Mrs. Hopwood. “Your papa has had several interviews with him lately; and it was but yesterday his lordship lodged a considerable sum of money in his hands, to pay off various claims upon him. He is going to Paris for a few days, to visit the earl, his father, who is very infirm, and is desirous to see him; and on his return he will pay us a visit. But do not be frightened, love,” she said, seeing the colour come into Georgina’s cheeks; “if you don’t like him, you shan’t have him. But don’t vex your papa. You will see his lordship—and try to like him—won’t you, love?—there—don’t fret yourself.”

“I’ll try to like him, mamma—I will,” said, or rather sobbed, Georgina: “but do not urge me yet—not yet.”

“No, my love; you shall have your own time, and your own way—remember that,” said her mother; “and be under no fear that you shall marry a lord, or any body else, unless you like. But I see your papa is gone out, and I must go and see what the servants

are about. Bless me, if it isn't one o'clock!" and she bustled out of the room, with all the nervousness of a confidential housekeeper who had left her keys in the store-room door.

Georgina, somewhat assured and comforted by her mother's promise, began, at her departure, to revolve in her mind what course she was to pursue with regard to Agnes, whom she felt a longing desire to see. Whilst considering various plans which might lead to a communication with her, Georgina observed a lad loitering about the gate, passing and repassing, and looking, from time to time, at the windows. Georgina thought she had seen the boy before; and, looking at him more attentively, recognized Major Caisson's scapegrace nephew. The moment the boy saw Georgina's face above the blind, he made the most anxious signals to her to come out to him. Wondering what he could possibly have to say, Georgina opened the hall door very quietly, and let him in.

"I beg pardon, Miss Georgina," said he;

“ but I want to speak to you particularly; and if you can let me in by the garden gate, I can tell you all that I have to say, without any body being any the wiser.”

Georgina was curious to know his communication, yet half afraid of the boy's mischievous talent.

“ You must promise me you intend nothing wrong.”

“ O, honour bright !” returned young Mr. Hervey, placing his hand upon his heart, with mock solemnity. “ No—I've something to say which will interest you very much.”

Georgina made a sign to him to go round to the gate; and putting on her bonnet, speedily let in the young amateur of squibs and crackers.

“ Well,” said he, “ I'm glad I've seen you; but I've waited a precious long time for it. I saw your father go out, and the boy too; but I did not like to trust him; so I thought I would take the chance of your peeping out of window.”

“ Well, what have you to tell me? Make haste, or I shall be missed,” said Georgina.

“ Don’t be in such a hurry,” returned the young hopeful; “ because you see I’ve got a good bit to say, and I shall be all the longer if you interrupt me. Your father is booked for some hours, for he is gone to town; so you’ve no fear for him. Now the fact is, that this is all a plan of my own—and now I’ll tell you——”

Georgina hastily promised not to interrupt him, and he proceeded to unfold his plan.

“ You must know, Miss Georgina, in the first place, that I got a situation as a post-boy at the post-office—that is, you know, a lad that rides backwards and forwards to town from country places, with letters, on a broken-kneed pony, and wears a blue jacket and a cockade. Well, some little time ago, when I was riding up to town, who should I see a walking along the Hammersmith road, but your friend, Miss Graham !”

“What, Agnes?”

“Yes, and no mistake. I shouldn’t have seen her, if I hadn’t accidentally have looked back; and I could hardly believe my precious eyesight. Well, of course I pulled up, and she didn’t know me from Adam. And how should she? ‘What,’ says I, ‘don’t you know that young scamp as put you all in such a fluster with the serpent, at the major’s?’ I never told you, Miss Georgina, how I did that. My eyes!—wasn’t it a lark?”

“No—never mind that. Pray go on,” said Georgina, impatiently.

“Nor how I served out your Pa? I told you I would, you know. That *was* a precious bit of fun! I can see the old boy kicking now—and then——”

“Now, pray tell me about Agnes, and never mind anything else,” interrupted Georgina, anxiously.

“Well, of course she knew who I was then; and she said her mother had quarrelled with

her, and she had left home that morning, and intended to come to town by the stage, and look for employment. But when she got to the stage, she had forgot to bring her money ; and so, sooner than go back, for fear of meeting her mother, she had set off to walk to town. But, poor thing ! she was in a nice way ; for her feet were so blistered, that she couldn't have walked another mile, to save her life. Well, I made her take what money I had ; because, I told her, she could give it me back when she got her things up ; for she didn't like to take it—which was nonsense ; and she got into a stage, which put her down close by the place she was going to."

" And where was that ?" hastily inquired Georgina.

" At a place called Shepherd's Market—up a street that leads out of Piccadilly."

" I'll go and see her, instantly," said Georgina, forgetting time and space, in her anxiety about her old friend.

“ Now don’t be in such a hurry,” said the young government functionary ; “ hear what I’ve got to say. You see, Miss Agnes lives, for the present, with the wife of that man Hunsman, who manages her mother’s affairs up at Beverley House ; and she wants to take in needle-work, but they won’t let her ; and are just as civil to her as if she was a queen. But, as I go there every day, and am best part of my time there—for I’ve left the post-office service—soon got tired of that—I’ve found out that some plot is hatching between Hunsman and a man called Jeffries, to get her some property that she has been robbed of. But, after all, what I wanted more particularly to say to you was this, that she is always crying, day and night, and nothing seems to pacify her ; and Hunsman’s wife told me, in confidence, that it’s about some gentleman that paid his addresses to her, and broke off about something your Pa told him. She said she had seen a letter that told her as much. Well, one day I

said to Miss Agnes, that if Mr. Hopwood had said any thing against her that wasn't right, why couldn't she make him explain? She was surprised how I could know what it was that troubled her; but I didn't choose to tell her that. However, she said she could never think of doing such a thing, because of you, Miss Georgina;—afraid, I suppose, of hurting your feelings, by saying your Pa had told a story about her. Now, you see, I thought that was carrying the thing a bit too far; and so, without saying a word to her, I came down here to see you, and try if you could not do something to put this matter to rights."

Georgina was greatly agitated during this recital; her colour came and went at every phrase; and, before the lad had ceased speaking, she had quite made up her mind what to do. It seemed that a few months had changed Georgina from a romping, thoughtless girl, to a reflecting, firm-minded woman; for what she would have feared to think of a short time

back, she now adopted without the smallest hesitation.

“ If I go to London, and see Agnes, can you accompany me?” she asked, after a moment’s pause.

“ To be sure I can—what’s to hinder me ?” said the youth. “ I’ve promised my brother, at Woolwich, to go and stay with him till uncle comes back : but I need not go for a day or two. You remember my brother, the cadet, don’t you?—he expects a commission every day. He did ask such a lot about you—and he says he shall come down here in the summer. But I told him that was no use ; for all the talk about here was, that you were going to marry a lord ! You should have seen him—my eyes !”

“ What conveyance can we get ?” asked Georgina, without heeding the young gentleman’s latter communication.

“ I’ll bring a post-chaise with me from town to-morrow, if you like,” said he.

“ No ; I must go to-day—I will not sleep till I see her.”

“ Well, I’ll step to Egham, and get a ‘ fly,’ ” suggested Mr. Hervey, junior. “ I can easily say it’s for a lady up the Green, who will walk to meet it. The man won’t know you, because you never go out;—it isn’t your pa’s ‘ system:’—so uncle used to say.” And the young wag chuckled at the notion.

Georgina thought his plan good, and promised to meet him on the road in half an hour.

“ But, I say, Miss Georgina,” said he, just as he was about to hurry away, “ I’m thinking, on second thoughts, that you had better not go.”

“ Not go !” said Georgina, impatiently ; “ why not ?”

“ Why, you see,” said he, seriously, “ how will it tell with your Pa’s ‘ system’ ?” and he ran out at the gate, with a broad grin on his face, as though he had blown up the old arbour with a sky-rocket.

Georgina returned within, and found her

mother busy with the pickles and preserves, in her store-room, re-covering such of the pots as were mouldy, and performing a variety of little offices, which a good house-wife knows to be of the last importance in domestic economy. Satisfied, therefore, that her mother had some hours' occupation, and that her father was not expected back till five o'clock, Georgina wrote a note, stating that she was gone for a ride, and should be back before dark, and left it upon her dressing-table, after the usual fashion of elopements. She then possessed herself of cloak and bonnet, and, by the egress of the garden-gate, shortly joined her young attendant, who was punctual with the 'fly,' and they proceeded, at a brisk pace, for London.

CHAPTER IX.

“To vouch this, is no proof,
Without more certain and more overt tests.”

CAPTAIN Bouverie had sought a few hours' repose, after the anxious and fatiguing duties he had just performed ; for since the fatal affair of the preceding morning, he had not closed his eyes. It was vainly, however, that he courted sleep :—the whirl of the travelling carriage was yet in his ears, and the distressing scenes he had witnessed, were too vividly impressed on his mind to admit at present of repose. It was nearly three o'clock, and Captain Bouverie, weary and unrefreshed, descended into his private sitting-room, and began to busy

himself with some papers, when two strangers were announced. On their entrance he was greeted by the smirking and self-confident visage of Mr. Jack Jeffries, and the more subdued and stolid physiognomy of his confederate, Mr. Jabez Hunsman. Captain Bouverie had not the slightest recollection of either of his visitors, and their appearance was something to create surprise as to the object of their call.

Jeffries advanced, hat in hand, with his usual air of easy assurance, and pulling to a more conspicuous elevation the clean collar which his rusty black stock had nearly extinguished, commenced as follows :

“ I presume, Captain Bouverie, you do not remember me.”

“ I really do not, sir,” was the captain’s laconic reply.

“ I am the confidential clerk of Mr. Robinson, solicitor, of Jermyn-street.”

“ Oh ! take a seat, sir,” said Captain Bouverie, eyeing him more closely.

“And this other gentleman, sir, is Mr. Hunsman, confidential adviser to Mrs. Maxwell of Englefield Green,” continued Mr. Jeffries ; and Jabez, at this introduction, made an attempt at a spurious bow. Captain Bouverie glanced at him, and motioned him to a chair.

“I suppose you bring me that £100 I was defrauded of at your employer’s office some little time since,” said Captain Bouverie to Jeffries.

“Why, sir—no, sir—not exactly *that*,” simpered the confidential clerk, who thought the notion truly facetious.

“Why the gen’leman aint so *much* out neither, Jack,” interposed Mr. Hunsman.—“Why, you see, sir,” and Jeffries edged himself forward on his chair to the utmost verge, and bending forward, till he made the space between himself and the gentleman he addressed decrease to an almost confidential point—“Why, you see, sir,” said Mr. John Jeffries, “that our business is of a very private and particular nature ; and although we do not bring you the

money actually back, yet from what we can tell you concerning it, the parties may be made to refund the money. It's what a lawyer doesn't like, sir ; but I know that as will make him."

"Do you mean to say, that Mr. Robinson was a party to that fraud upon me, knowing it to be such?" asked Captain Bouverie, seriously.

"Why, Lord bless *you*, sir, you seems as innocent as a babby in them matters ; you don't know half that cove's rigs," broke forth Mr. Hunsman ; but his victory was cut short by a severe sign from his companion.

"I believe I did not say *that*, sir," said Jeffries, bowing with a reserved and professional air ; "what I said, sir, was,—that I knew that as would make him refund. You see, sir, there is a great legal difference between a man refunding money, and acknowledging himself a *particeps criminis* in the obtainment thereof."

"Well, sir, you must be a little more communicative on the subject of your visit to me, before I can say anything in the matter," said Captain Bouverie.

“Why don’t you up and tell the gen’leman at once, Jack?” suggested the straight-forward Mr. Hunsman:—“what’s the use of beating about the bush?”

“If I am not competent, perhaps you will conduct the case yourself, Mr. Hunsman,” observed the offended man of law.

“I did not say so Jack,” growled Jabez; “only I thought the gen’leman would like to hear the upshot on it ”

“If you have anything to say to me, I shall be obliged by your losing no time,” said Captain Bouverie, “as I have much to occupy me.”

“Why then, sir, I will be plain with you,” resumed Mr. Jeffries, with his former placidity and professional air. “I consider myself an injured man. I have served Mr. Robinson for many years, and have conducted his most important cases with honour and profit; and when, as in duty bound to my wife and family, I had to practise for myself and did not succeed, and

was obliged to return to him, he has never been the man to say,—Mr. Jeffries, what's past is past, and we'll be the same as before. No, sir ; I've been a marked man ever since. Take my word, sir, Mr. Robinson is a bad man. It is true he can insinuate himself."

"You *said* insinivate," interrupted Mr. Hunsman. " Yes ; I'm blowed if he carn't. He's as insinivating as a cork-screw. Just let him get the pint of his toe in, and you'll see if he won't wheedle in his whole carcase ; and more nor that—if arter he don't draw you—but my eyes ! he's a rum 'un, and no mistake." And Mr. Hunsman closed this elegant episode in the proceedings, by drawing his finger briskly along the interior of his cheek, and ejecting from his mouth a sound like the report of a pocket pistol, intended, doubtless, as a playful illustration of his foregoing image.

The Captain looked impatiently at one and the other of his visitors, and seemed as though undecided, whether or not he should ring the

bell, and order them both out ; but Mr. Jeffries again took up the case.

“ You see, sir,” said that worthy expounder of the intricacies of the law, “ that my friend Mr. Hunsman is a plain blunt man, and you will excuse him.”

Here Jabez was about again to interpose, but was checked by his friend’s extended hand, as though he besought his silence.

“ What I wished to convey to you was, merely a few facts relating to Mr. Robinson, and to show cause to you, why such facts are worth your notice.”

“ Well, sir, if you really have anything to say, which concerns me, pray be explicit,” said Captain Bouverie impatiently.

“ That is just what I was coming to, sir,” urged the man of law. “ I have said that Mr. Robinson is a bad man, sir.”

“ Oh ! aint he ?” ejaculated Mr. Hunsman.

“ A very bad man, sir,” continued Mr. Jeffries ; “ and I cannot shut my eyes to his malpractices.”

“Nor your ears, neither Jack !” again interposed the waggish Jabez.

“I have gone on, sir, as a faithful servant for many years,” proceeded Mr. Jeffries; “I have endeavoured to hide many things as I’ve been ashamed of; but, sir, I have such a thing as a conscience.”

Here Mr. Hunsman directed a peculiar glance at his companion, which had almost the effect of overturning his gravity.

“Yes, sir;—a conscience !” he repeated, with an emphasis as strong, as the asseveration was startling; “and I cannot bear to go on year after year, lending myself to these things which I, in my own practice, wouldn’t do on no account.”

“But what have these things to do with me, sir?” asked Captain Bouverie.

“I’m just going to tell you, sir.—”

“It aint of no manner of use a interruptin him,” said Mr. Hunsman, as it were in parenthesis; “Jack’s like the ould pinsioner at

Greenwich ; he must have his own way a telling a story, and none other wont suit him."

"I was about to say," resumed Jack, treating with dignified disregard his friend's irregularity, "that one can't go on for ever in these ways, and that I and Mr. Hunsman, knowing a good deal more than others wish, are determined to have justice done to people that you know of, Captain Bouverie. Now the long and the short of the business is this;—if we can recover property for a person that you know, who has been wronged of it, and, for doing a matter of pure justice, lose our places, don't you think we ought to be handsomely rewarded?"

"Are you quite certain it is in your power to procure the restitution of property unjustly obtained from some friend of mine?" asked Captain Bouverie.

"Just as sure as a sack-bag holds four and twenty hares, and no mistake about that, neither," answered Mr. Hunsman.

"I believe I may promise you, without the

chance of failure, if we can agree upon terms," replied Jeffries, pressing Mr. Hunsman's remark.

"Well, I can only advise with my friend, if you will inform me who he is," returned Captain Bouverie. "Of course I can agree to nothing in which I am not a principal."

"But in this business you are a principal, sir," retorted Jeffries; "at least as good as a principal; and I'll tell you how. You see, sir, if you don't take this business in hand, nobody else will; and as I understood that you have a respect for the young lady, why, I don't think you would be the gentleman to let her go to the wall, for want of a little support."

"Assuredly not, if I can interfere properly. But say at once what you expect of me, and who the person is, whose interest I am to charge myself with," said the Captain.

"As to what we expect, sir, it is simply this; to pay us for the loss of our places, for serving your friend's cause," said Mr. Jeffries.

"Them's the very terms, Jack. You've spoke

like a angel at last,"—interposed his friend, with a hearty application of the palm of his hand to his thigh.

"That is just," said the Captain, replying to Jeffries. But what do you value your places at? and what is the value of the property you propose to recover?"

"Ah! that's the pint!" cried Mr. Hunsman: "now that's what I call talking sensible like."

"The property, sir, was valued at five thousand pounds and upwards," replied Jeffries, to the Captain; "and was given by a dying nobleman to an illegitimate child. The deed was destroyed, and another substituted by the trustee, in favour of himself; and the mother was a party to it, and I was a witness—a concealed witness—to the transaction, from the commencement to the end!"

"Now what do you expect, if you are able to bring all this home to the guilty parties?" asked Captain Bouverie.

"Why, sir, should you think five or six

hundred pounds too much ?” said Jeffries ; “just to start us in life,—when we are out of bread.”

“ No ; not a penny too much,” said the Captain, “ as you were no parties to the fraud ; and I presume your knowledge of it was not of your own seeking.”

“ It just was,” cried Mr. Hunsman ; “ it was all of Jack’s sharpness, and that’s the same thing.”

“ But you have forgotten to inform me of the name of the party,” said Captain Bouverie.

“ Miss Agnes Graham,” said Jeffries.

“ Miss Agnes Graham !” repeated Captain Bouverie, astonished.

“ Yes, sir ; that’s the young lady that’s been robbed out of her property by Mr. Robinson, and her own mother—Mrs. Maxwell.”

“ You astonish me, indeed,” said Captain Bouverie. “ But since I left Egham, my acquaintance has entirely ceased with that young lady ; and living as she is, with her mother, I

do not see with what propriety any other person can interfere."

"Oh ! I can put you to rights there," said Mr. Hunsman ; " cos you see, the child isn't living with her mother no longer ; she's living with me, leastways with my wife, which in course is the same thing."

" With your wife !" repeated Captain Bouverie.

" Why, Captain, I know how the cat jumps, as well as him as made it," continued Mr. Hunsman. " I must tell you, that the babby was brought up with me, and never was taken no notice on whatsoever, by her faggot of a mother, till she had the money left her ; and then there was a scramble for it. But that isn't what I was a going to say ; what I was a going to say, was this, and no mistake,—that the poor babby was turned out of her mother's house because she kept company along with you. That night we came and caught you there, Captain, my eyes and limbs, how the old

tartar did go on, seeing as how she intended to pitch it into you for £600, and that just spoilt her game. Well, the next morning, the poor babby was obliged to brush ; and when your note was given to her, Captain,—I knowed it were your'n, cos I looked over and saw it,—I thought for sure her poor little heart would a burst out of her bussum ; and I'd take my davy that the ould fox down at Egham had been a saying summut as he had no law for. Howsomever, I told her to go to my wife, till something could be done ; cos my loaf, though no great things, were better nor no loaf at all, mind ye ; and she, a poor, unprotected young creatur beside ; and though I say it, a better hearted babby, nor a more innocenter, doesn't live in the three kingdoms. But she shall have a crust as long as I've got one, come what will, and no mistake."

Mr. Hunsman had worked himself, towards the conclusion of this harangue, to such an unwonted point of enthusiasm, that in his anxiety

to impose upon Captain Bouverie, that his sentiments towards Miss Graham were purely disinterested, he had almost succeeded in imposing upon himself, and fancied at that moment, that he entertained for the young lady of whom he had been speaking, a feeling of kindness and compassion—a weakness of which Mr. Jabez Hunsman, during his long and chequered career, had never once been accused.

The sagacious Mr. Jeffries could not help admiring his friend's tact; and finding that sentiment was likely to be the order of the day (for Captain Bouverie was looking at that moment like a living edition of "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy,") he observed—"My friend Mr. Hunsman, sir, has a most sincere respect for the young lady, and many a time have we talked over this matter. But then the poor young lady has had no friends, but such as could not help her. If I had been better off in the world, I would have had the affair up long ago, for the sake of justice. But there is a para-

mount duty upon every man—the duty he owes his wife and family.”

A significant look from Mr. Hunsman, recalled the speaker from a flight which he was about to essay; and Jeffries, knowing his friend's eccentric impatience upon the peculiar subject upon which he had touched, wisely avoided the risk of collision.

Much of this by-play was however lost upon Captain Bouverie, whose mind was at that moment entirely engrossed with his own reflections. The name of Agnes Graham had given rise to most painful recollections. It cannot be supposed that when Captain Bouverie had deemed it a duty he owed himself, to take leave of that young lady, he could at once dismiss her from his mind. On the contrary, he had thought of her long, and bitterly bewailed the want of maternal care which had betrayed into irregularities a naturally virtuous mind. Indeed, so great was his regard for her, that he would have sacrificed much of prejudice

for her sake, could he have remained sure of her individual worthiness. But Mr. Hopwood's unequivocal statement forbade him to deceive himself. From no other source would Captain Bouverie have taken so abrupt a determination. Could he have found any reasonable doubt, he would have investigated the report; but he could not doubt the evidence of Mr. Hopwood's senses. And yet such is the uncertain nature of our judgment, when biassed by feeling, that although Captain Bouverie felt morally strong in his decision, he could not divest himself of a certain qualm, arising from an undefined and vague presentiment of having acted hastily. This feeling arose principally from the rough homespun speech of Hunsman. He had known her from a child—he had delivered a strong and fervent opinion of her excellence, couched as it was in homely guise—an opinion which coincided well with the secret feelings of his heart.

It seems a fault in our common nature, to

give an individual credit for just so much honesty of purpose as the surliness and selfishness of his nature enables him to assume of roughness or bluntness of manner and speech ; and by this ingenious process of reasoning, Mr. Jabez Hunsman became, in the estimation of Captain Bouverie, a worthy honest man, and the disinterested, though humble friend, of an unprotected girl ; whilst Jack Jeffries, simply by association, stood in the light of one whose virtues were struggling with poverty.

“ Well, sir,” said Captain Bouverie, at length, to Hunsman ; “ I have no objection to investigate this business a little closer—it seems a singular affair—that is, if Miss Graham consents that I should act for her.”

“ Oh ! won’t she though ;” interrupted the courteous Jabez. “ Why, the poor babby’s done nothing but cry over that ’ere bit o’ paper you sent her, till her face is no bigger than a ha’porth o’ cheese stuck edgeways ! Yes, I b’lieve you, she will consent, and no mistake.”

“When will you like to enter into the case, sir?” asked Mr. Jeffries, who was not one of those who allowed himself to be in the background long; “because my papers are all ready at my lodgings. I’ve been at great pains to make every thing so clear, that no doubt can exist of success, if my plans are followed.”

“Oh! nobody won’t doubt you, Jack, on a pint of law,” returned Mr. Hunsman;—“you’re the ’cutest chap as I know on, by chalks.”

“Well, suppose you both call on me this evening, about ten o’clock, as I shall be engaged till that time,” said Captain Bouverie; “we will then go into the business fully, and adopt a plan of action.”

“I’ve got one ready, sir,” answered Jeffries; “I’ve had time enough to think over it, and will stake my professional reputation on its soundness.”

“Very well, then come to-night. Good day to you—good day,” returned the Captain, as

the professional gentleman and his companion were taking their leave : but their departure was for a moment delayed, by the announcement of another visitor. It was no other than the young scapegrace who had made his morning visit to Georgina at Egham, which has been already recorded.

“What ! young sky-rocket ! what do you do here ?” whispered Hunsman, who was at the door as the young gentleman entered.

“All right, Mr. Hunsman,” returned the other, showing him a neat three-cornered note, and then advancing directly towards Captain Bouverie.

“I say, Jack !” said the wary Jabez to his friend, when outside the apartment—“what lark has that young penn’orth o’ gunpowder got afoot ? I had better wait and see he’s playing us no tricks.”

“No, no, there’s no danger of that ; come along, we’ve got a good deal to do ;” and away went the confederated worthies, to mature their plans.

In the mean time, the note had been delivered and read. It was as follows:—

“Miss Hopwood will feel obliged if Mr. Bouverie will favour her with a call. She having something of importance to communicate to him. The bearer is Major Caisson’s nephew.”

“Miss Hopwood!” exclaimed Captain Bouverie, with the utmost surprise:—“is she in town alone?”

“She is,” returned young Mr. Hervey; “and she comes to town only to speak to you, and is going back directly. Her Pa knows nothing about it. My eyes, won’t he kick up a shindy about ‘the system.’”

Captain Bouverie speedily equipped himself, and accompanied by the young amateur in combustibles, left the hotel.

Under the guidance of his young companion, he quickly found himself at Shepherd’s Market, the locality chosen by Mr. Hunsman’s better and larger half, to beguile her comparative state of widowhood; the much greater

portion of her husband's time being devoted to his mistress, and the responsible duties of his situation in her household. Captain Bouverie followed his youthful guide up two flights of narrow stairs, in one of the small houses of that humble quarter, and was then, without further ceremony, introduced into a front room, where a young lady was seated alone, whom at a glance he recognised as Miss Georgina Hopwood.

She rose to receive him as he entered, and welcomed him with great politeness, quite free from the embarrassment she once experienced in his presence. Her countenance was much paler than usual, and her demeanour staid and reserved, and it seemed to Captain Bouverie, that during the comparatively short interval which had elapsed since he beheld her a blushing girl at her father's house, a marked change was visible in her manner and appearance, even as though years had passed over her since that period.

“ You will doubtless, Captain Bouverie, consider my conduct, to say the least, singular,” commenced Georgina ; “ to request an interview with you. and away from my father’s house. But I have learnt so much since this morning, that I deem it a duty I owe to a dear and injured friend. as well as justice to my own feelings, to take this step.”

Captain Bouverie bowed, and awaited her further communication.

“ I came to town, sir, expressly to see my friend, and early school-fellow, Miss Graham,” resumed Georgina, in a firmer voice. “ I heard she was obliged to quit her home ; but I had no opportunity of hearing where she had removed, until the youth whom I sent to you, came to Egham this morning and informed me. From Agnes herself I have obtained a knowledge of all that has occurred to her, since we last met, but more particularly, Captain Bouverie, of one circumstance in which you are interested, and which is the reason of my present communication.”

“ If you allude, Miss Hopwood, to the note I conceived it my duty to write Miss Graham,” said Captain Bouverie, “ be assured it was dictated from no caprice, but from the accidental knowledge of a circumstance, of a sufficiently grave character to justify me in the course I adopted ; and I do not hesitate to tell you, Miss Hopwood, that it cost me a struggle—a painful struggle. But you will see yourself, I could not do otherwise, when I inform you, that it was from your own father, Miss Hopwood, whose word I could not doubt, that I heard the facts which determined me.”

“ I know it all, Captain Bouverie,” returned Georgina ; “ and I beg to assure you, that my father, when he related a circumstance to you, to the disparagement of Agnes, laboured under a gross mistake. He little thought it was his own daughter who deserved that censure, and not the innocent girl who has suffered so much from it.”

“ How ! Miss Hopwood,” exclaimed Captain

Bouverie earnestly :—"pray explain—if I have been in error—if I have wronged my poor Agnes, even unintentionally—I shall never forgive myself."

"Yes, sir, it was I, upon whom the entire blame of that unfortunate business must fall," resumed Georgina. "I call it unfortunate, from its consequence; but such a simple, unpremeditated act of folly, hardly deserves so very serious a visitation."

Georgina then related to Captain Bouverie the circumstance of Mr. Hervey seeking her in the garden; of being surprised by Agnes on her return from Major Caisson's; of bolting the garden gate upon the young cadet; and of Agnes and the cadet being surprized by Mr. Hopwood and the major, in that equivocal situation.

Great was the astonishment of Captain Bouverie, to hear so simple a solution of a circumstance which had involved such consequences; and he hardly knew which to admire most, the patience and endurance of Agnes

under an undeserved stigma, which regard for the feelings of Georgina alone prevented her from explaining, or of Georgina herself, in thus frankly acknowledging, and drawing upon herself all the misconstruction which such a confession might create.

“ You are a noble-minded girl !” exclaimed Captain Bouverie, after a slight pause :—“ and now, having done so much for your friend Agnes, may I entreat a kind favour at your hands ?”

“ Name it, sir,” said Georgina ; “ what little I have the power to do, you may command.”

“ To make my peace with Agnes, by informing her of what has passed, and telling her—”

“ Nay, it will come with much better grace from yourself,” interrupted Georgina ; “ and you need not wait long for her forgiveness, for she never could withhold it from any body for five minutes.”

“ And where shall I see Agnes, that I may

at once acknowledge my error," asked Captain Bouverie.

"Here, in this apartment ; and immediately, if you please," replied Georgina ; "for she is in the next room :"—and without waiting a reply, she left Captain Bouverie, returning, however, after the lapse of a few seconds, accompanied by Agnes.

Captain Bouverie flew to meet her, and possessing himself of both her hands, began to stammer forth such inarticulate phrases as the excited state of his feelings would allow him.

"There—there," interrupted Georgina ; "say no more, I have already said enough for you. All you have to do now is to be happy :"—and she took one of the hands of Agnes, and pressed it between her own.—"Let what is past be forgotten," she continued ; "think only of the future ;" and returning the hand she held, to that of the Captain, she added,—"appreciate her good qualities, Captain Bouverie. I know you will. Think of her as she deserves ; you

cannot think of her too highly. For me," and her voice faltered, "it matters but little ; I shall at all events see you happy, dear Agnes : " and as she tenderly kissed her, Agnes felt her friend's warm tears trickle down her cheek.

"But why are you so sad, dear Georgina !" asked Agnes.

"I'm sure I do not know," replied Georgina, drying her eyes. "I ought not to be sad. But God bless you ; I must return home ; I do not know what my parents will say. Farewell, Captain Bouverie ! think of me as a friend. Farewell, Agnes ; you will hear of me soon again."

Captain Bouverie accompanied her to the conveyance which had brought her to town, and which was now in attendance ; and at her earnest request she then resigned herself to the care of her young companion, with whom she started at a brisk pace towards home.

During Georgina's absence, the Hopwood household had been thrown into a state of in-

conceivable anxiety. She was not missed till dinner time ; as it was not an unusual circumstance for her to study in her own room for hours together. But when she was sought, and the note she left was brought to Mr. Hopwood, he became in a state of almost frantic terror. Some rash determination was attributed to her, from her conduct upon her father's disclosure of the morning ; and Mrs. Hopwood upbraided her bewildered husband with the loss of their child, in his despotic attempts to force her inclination. Enquiries were made in every direction, but nothing was elicited ; no chaise and four had been ordered ; no gentleman of a suspicious appearance had been seen loitering about ; in short, it was a mystery. Hopwood declared, if she ever returned, she should marry whom she pleased—he would give up all his darling projects, could he but see his daughter again ; and Mrs. Hopwood declared her belief, that her poor child had broke her heart, in her struggle against her father's tyranny, and that he might

never expect to see her any more ;—for she dreamt of clean linen the night before, which was always a sign of death.

It was in the midst of this turmoil of tears and lamentation, that the “fly” drove up to the gate, and in another moment, the sight of Georgina gladdened the eyes of the bereaved couple. She was instantly in their arms, and their joy was too great to admit of reproach.

Mrs. Hopwood muttered something about “fears of Waterloo-bridge,” and Mr. Hopwood stole a glance, to see whether some “tall gentleman” might not have entered the room, to whom he was to be introduced as his future son-in-law. But no—he only saw young scapegrace standing at a respectful distance, about whom he did not care to ask.

“But, my dear child,” said Hopwood, after the first emotions had passed—“what could tempt you to leave your father—your mother—your home?”

“Hush !” papa, said Georgina, kissing him,

and stopping his mouth playfully with her hand ; “ my head aches, and I am tired ; and if you will promise not to say another word, and leave me to tell you at my own time, why—” she whispered in his ear, “ I will marry Lord Walgrave !”

CHAPTER X.

“I like not that paying back.”

MR. ROBINSON'S usual morning attendance at his offices in Jermyn Street was ten o'clock ; and punctually as the clock struck, on the morning succeeding the events of the last chapter, did that respectable practitioner arrive.

Jeffries was of course already at his desk ; and Mr. Robinson passing on to his own private room, the door of which he opened with his Bramah key, was soon busied with papers and parchments that were awaiting his serious consideration.

A short time only elapsed, when a very slight rap aroused Mr. Jeffries, who on opening the

door, was greeted by his friend, Mr. Hunsman. The friends consulted together a short time in an under tone, during which Mrs. Maxwell's man of business showed the confidential clerk a note; when Jeffries, apparently satisfied, resumed his seat, and motioned his friend Jabez to a chair. Mr. Jeffries was shortly afterwards summoned by his employer into the inner office.

"Well, Mr. Jeffries," said the smooth-tongued solicitor, "and how stands that matter of Howell and Snooks?"

"Just where it did, sir," answered Jeffries.

"Indeed! what is the reason you have not proceeded in it?" asked Mr. Robinson.

"Why sir, I have had some business of my own lately, which has completely occupied me," replied Jeffries pertly.

"Mr. Jeffries, you must understand that my business must be first attended to; my clients must not be neglected, sir;" said the solicitor, sharply. "Go, sir, and set about it immediately—and let me hear no more of *your* business."

“Why, sir, I’m sorry to be disagreeable,” continued Jeffries; “but I must trouble you a good deal more with my business. I want to have a little private conversation with you, sir.”

“Private conversation, eh?” said Mr. Robinson. “Well, Mr. Jeffries, certainly; you can consult me to-morrow morning;—yes, I can give you half an hour to-morrow morning.”

“To-morrow morning, sir, will be too late,” answered Jeffries; “I must tell you, sir, it concerns yourself, as well as me and others.”

“Indeed!” said Mr. Robinson looking at his clerk, inquiringly. “I did not know we had any business in common, Mr. Jeffries; but since it seems we have, pray state your case.”

“Well, then, sir, to commence,” said Jeffries, taking a seat, and placing his elbow on the table with an ominous familiarity; “there is one duty which a man has to perform, which is paramount to all others—yes,” repeated the clerk, in the same strain he generally used when con-

templating any equivocal dealing—"paramount to all others, sir;—I mean the duty a man owes to his wife and family!"

"Clearly, Mr. Jeffries; clearly so," said the solicitor; the clerk's feeling exordium touching the sympathetic chord in his breast—wife of his bosom—pledges of affection—and so forth. "Yes, Mr. Jeffries; yes;—a man must look to his family:—proceed."

"Why, sir, I've been thinking," continued Mr. Jeffries; "I've been thinking, that I am growing old."

"Old! old!" interrupted the solicitor; "no, no—not old—quite a young man; bless me! I consider myself young, Mr. Jeffries; you're quite a lad, you are indeed;—but proceed."

"People tell me different, sir," resumed the clerk; "but what I was going to say is this; that it is time I made some provision for my family, and do it I must."

"Well, that is all very laudable, and I trust you will, Mr. Jeffries," answered his master;

but I hope you have a better speculation than your last, eh, Mr. Jeffries? not that I regret your making that trial at my expense; young men must learn wisdom."

"And they must learn honesty too, sir," added Mr. Jeffries.

"I did not mean to attach any unpleasant meaning to that little experiment of your's, Mr. Jeffries," said Mr. Robinson; "but, however, I am happy if it has been of service to you in more than one way."

"It has, sir," continued Jeffries, gravely; "it has taught me never to go into business, without capital; and my knowledge of other people's affairs, I find, sir, will enable me to procure it."

"Eh? It has once Mr. Jeffries," said the solicitor; "but I think it will hardly serve your turn again?"

"I must be plain with you, sir," said Jeffries, assuming a confidence he was far from feeling, at the moment when he was about to draw so

largely upon the solicitor's patience ; " after his wife and family, a man's next duty is to the public, and I have the means, sir, of doing both."

" Very desirable, Mr. Jeffries, very desirable," said Mr. Robinson fidgetting a little in his chair ; " but pray how have I anything in common with this extensive line of duty which you propose to yourself ?"

" And yet you have, if you did but know it," said Jeffries, with a sly smile. " Now, sir, I know very well that you never proposed an extensive line of duty which did not include your own interest : I know that, Mr. Robinson."

" Good God ! sir," cried Robinson, enraged, " do you think my valuable time is to be wasted by listening to your impertinence ? Go from the room, sir, instantly. You have been drinking this morning, as usual : you are drunk, Jeffries ; quite drunk. I fear I cannot pass this over."

“ I fear, indeed, you will hardly be able to get over the business I am about to open,” exclaimed Jeffries, justly incensed at his employer’s base insinuation ; for Mr. Jeffries had only taken *two* glasses on that morning. “ To be plain, sir, I mean that you have done one thing as will hang you, and I know it.”

“ Mr. Jeffries ! what *do* you mean, sir ?” exclaimed the solicitor, turning pale ; “ do you mean to extort money from me a second time, sir ? beware !”

“ No, no, not that,” said Jeffries : “ to have got money out of you once, is quite enough for one man to say. I intend now that others should take their turn ; and I can put them in the way of so doing Stop !” cried the clerk authoritatively, observing Robinson was about to speak. “ There was a certain deed of gift from a dying nobleman to his illegitimate child. I mean you to restore the property to the right owner. You are aware I know all.”

“ Restore the estate ; I will die first !” cried

Robinson, desperation striving with fear :
“ your knowledge, what will it avail with a jury ? Look at my character, sir, and look at yours. Don’t think to frighten me, sir ; on that point I am strong.”

“ Not so strong as you fancy, sir,” said Jeffries ; “ and as for dying, there are two ways of doing that—natural and artificial ; and, if you don’t mind, you’ll have to do the latter, and give up the estate into the bargain.”

“ My good Jeffries,” remarked Robinson, in a mollified tone, after a pause, “ you are a strange man—a strange character, I might even say. What do you propose by all this ? Let us understand each other. Perhaps I have not acted towards you so liberally as I ought to have done, or as your talents deserve ; but I intended to have done so, I assure you.”

“ Gammon !” cried Jeffries. “ I like a man to do as he ought at once.”

“ And so I will, Jeffries ; so I will,” said Robinson, soothingly. “ My dear sir, only reflect :

what duty are you performing to yourself or your family, by disclosing transactions of past years? For my part, my character cannot be permanently injured; but these things, when they come to be spoken about, awaken many unworthy suspicions, which a professional man should of all things avoid."

"You've brought it all upon yourself," said the clerk, rising. "You would not remunerate my talents as they deserved; you would not see my light under the bushel; you would not—" and here Mr. Jeffries, finding himself at a loss for further illustration, opened the door, and beckoned Mr. Hunsman forward.

Jabez obeyed the summons with an alacrity which a hope of present proceeds commonly communicated to his movements.

"You know this gentleman, I believe?" inquired Jeffries, pointing to his friend, who endeavoured suddenly to render himself worthy of the appellation, by accomplishing a profound bow.

“Know him? gentleman?” cried Robinson, vaguely.

“Gentleman? yes,” exploded Hunsman, “and if I aint a gen’leman, blow me if I think as there’s one in the room. What say, Jack? am I wanted yet?”

“Is *that* gentleman come yet?” demanded Jeffries.

“What gentleman do you mean?” interposed Robinson. “I hope you have not imparted your present business to any living soul; surely, this man—”

“That’s the honourablest title as you can bestow: I *am* a man,” cried Hunsman, with dignity, “and that’s what you aint. You’re anything but, and a little more. Yes, Jack,” and he turned towards his friend, “the gentleman is come, and is now sitting in the office, on the tender hooks of impatience.”

“You see, sir,” cried Jeffries, addressing his master, “we stand no nonsense, now. Hunsman is my witness.”

“Am I not?” cried Hunsman.

“And we have, after due deliberation, made known that precious swindle of yours to a gentleman, who is determined to see justice done to an unprotected female.”

“To an innocent gal. Shame on ye; I’m surprised at you, Mr. Robinson,” added Hunsman, in a tone of moral rebuke, to which the party addressed paid little attention, that gentleman being at the moment in a state of perplexity inconceivable.

“Come hither, Jeffries,” cried Robinson faintly, as he was about to leave the office; “you do not intend—you cannot wish to betray me. Why had you not spoken to me before you took this rash step? Who is this gentleman?”

“You know him well enough,” cried Jeffries, who, with all the meanness of a dastardly nature, exulted in the abasement of his master. “Pray walk in, Captain Bouverie; you will find Mr. Robinson quite alone.”

Bouverie made his appearance at this moment, and silently motioned to the two friends to retire from the room.

“I am come, Mr. Robinson,” said Bouverie, seating himself, and fixing his eyes mildly but firmly upon the face of the disconcerted solicitor, “I am come upon a most extraordinary and, so far as you yourself are concerned, a most unpleasant business.”

“I heard, Captain Bouverie,—” gasped Robinson.

“That worthy, conscientious man, your clerk, has prepared you for this interview, I presume,” said Bouverie. “Really, sir, this is a most painful business. I would wish, however, before I proceed further, to hear what you have to say upon it.”

Robinson had, by this time, in part collected his scattered thoughts; and, with an instinct peculiar to a certain class of mankind, foresaw no better way of clearing his own character, than by attracting attention to the bad charac-

ter of another. "That worthy, conscientious man, my clerk?" said he, with as much everyday manner as he could at the moment assume; "are you aware, sir, that he is one of the most notorious rascals in this town? that this is a conspiracy to extort money, Captain Bouverie? My dear sir, you are a very young man: I respect the warmth of feeling which impels you to undertake the cause of the oppressed—of those you fancy so: but you are mistaken, you are, I assure you. Young gentlemen must, after all, wait for experience."

"I have experience enough," answered Bouverie, slightly nettled at a remark which it is the fate of every young man to hear, "to know this, Mr. Robinson, that if your clerk be what you report of him, you derive no additional respectability from your employment of him. Be he what he may, he has told me so much, and has confirmed it by such evidence, as will justify me in prosecuting this affair forthwith."

“But, Captain Bouverie,” expostulated Robinson, perplexed, “is the word—the solemn assurance—of a respectable man, like myself, to weigh nothing against the reckless assertions of a vindictive scoundrel, who would ruin me if he could?”

“Were it merely assertion,” returned Bouverie, “your word would outweigh his undoubtedly, if he be what you represent him to be; but I have more than assertion to proceed upon—I have proof.”

“Proof!” cried the solicitor, aghast.

“What I consider proof, I should say,” resumed the Captain. “At all events, this thing must be sifted to the bottom. In justice to yourself, I insist upon it. Nay, nay,” he continued, “do not deprecate this step. I have had reason to believe you an honourable man, Mr. Robinson. You remember, doubtless. Let the world be fully apprized of it, lest there should be some mistake or doubt about it hereafter.”

Mr. Robinson would have looked foolish, but that his consternation was too great to admit of the manifestation of any minor emotion. He arose, and walked to the door of the office, which he opened stealthily, and having satisfied himself that neither Jeffries nor his companion, Hunsman, were listening, a frailty to which the former, as Robinson well knew, was especially prone, he silently returned to his seat.

“Well, Mr. Robinson,” said Bouverie, after a long pause, taking out his watch ; “my time is precious. I presume the business between us is for the present settled. I am now about to call upon my solicitor, to whom I beg to refer you in the further stages of this matter.”

“Nay, nay, be not so hasty. You military men are always so prompt,” cried Robinson, insinuatingly. “I have been thinking, Captain Bouverie, how I can explain this affair to you ; it was a most delicate one, I assure you ;” and he sighed. “The late earl,” he proceeded, “the father of the young lady in whom you appear so

deeply interested, certainly did intend to leave a considerable sum to her, and directed me to frame a deed for that purpose."

"Aye?" said Captain Bouverie, anxiously.

"Yes,—he did so, I confess—" continued the solicitor, "but—ah! sir, these high folks are but poor hands at business—he wished me to frame such a deed as would leave the property to the exclusive management of the mother—one Mrs. Maxwell."

"Indeed!" cried the Captain; "I was not aware. You remonstrated against it, of course?"

"The question implies a knowledge of her character," answered Robinson; "a bad, bad woman—a wicked woman, Captain Bouverie; but, sir, the earl was a man who would not bear remonstrance. I dared not do it—I could not. He was my patron—my friend—my best friend; I could not embitter his last moments by insinuating a doubt of Mrs. Maxwell's integrity."

"Proceed, Mr. Robinson," said Bouverie;

“ I am deeply interested. What then did you do ? how did you act ? ”

“ It was an honourable fraud ! ” cried Robinson, with animation ; “ I prepared the deed in my own favour—inserted my own name, instead of that of Miss Agnes Graham, and it was executed, and I hold that deed.”

Bouverie was silent for some minutes. “ I do not wish to raise needless doubts as to your statement, sir,” he said, at length ; “ but I cannot conceive how your mere substitution of another name could deprive Mrs. Maxwell of the controul of the money which, as I understood you, the earl intended to leave her, in trust for his daughter.”

“ Oh ! my dear young gentleman,” cried Robinson, “ you do not understand these legal points.”

“ I do not,” returned Bouverie, sternly ; “ but I mean to do so. If it be, as you say, sir, I cannot conceive why Mrs. Maxwell should have *connived* at this proceeding ; unless, indeed, you

offered, and she accepted, a consideration for maintaining secrecy."

Mr. Robinson's visage elongated considerably at the conclusion of this speech, and had he not been too absorbed in his own unhappy reflections, he might have heard an unmannerly titter that slid through the key-hole, and dissipated itself through the apartment.

"I must now leave you," said Bouverie, rising; "it is clear you are either unprepared, or unwilling to satisfy me. Be it so. Good morning, Mr. Robinson."

"Stay, for Heaven's sake, stay!" cried the solicitor, suddenly rising; a hope of escape from the utter ruin which a public disclosure of his villany would inevitably entail upon him, occurring to him.—"Stay, Captain Bouverie; a few words will suffice to convince you that I had no evil intentions in this affair, originally."

"I do not understand you, sir," cried Bouverie; "pray be explicit. I have wasted too much time already."

“Why,” cried Robinson, who felt it necessary that he should emerge from the corner into which he had been driven, with as much grace as circumstances would permit—“it was always my intention, when Miss Graham arrived at a proper age, to pay the amount into her own hands—don’t you see, sir? my sole design was to prevent the possibility of Mrs. Maxwell’s making away with the property.”

“Let us speak plainly,” returned Bouverie; “it were idle for me to tell you, that I believe what you have just stated: however, it is not my wish to destroy your reputation with the world at large.”

“Surely, surely,” said Robinson, abjectly, “you could not desire to ruin me for a mere fault of the head, which my concern for others led me to fall into. I have a heart, Captain Bouverie.”

“The value of the property was about £5000 I think,” said Bouverie, paying little attention to the startling fact that the solicitor had just announced; “rather more I believe, than five.”

“ Oh dear ! no,” cried Robinson ; “ five ? lord bless me.”

“ And the interest upon that sum might be about five more. I shall let you off easily, sir ; you must give me a cheque for £7000.”

Robinson looked like a baffled badger, when this proposition was made to him. To part with money was at all times “ a sad thing, a very sad thing,” to the solicitor—but to make restitution—to be compelled to make it—was what he could by no means understand. Mr. Robinson, in one sense, might indeed be said to *do* justice ; but his miscellaneous reading had taught him to look upon her merely as a female, whose sole property consisted of a pair of scales, and who had the misfortune of being blind ; a calamity with which our solicitor was hardly disposed to sympathize. In a word, had there really existed such a representative of the principle, situated as artists delight to represent her, Mr. Robinson would long ago have contrived to swindle her out of her scales.

We cannot pursue this conversation further. It were too humiliating to record the alternate threats and entreaties that proceeded from the solicitor, whilst he was engaged with his young and inexperienced, but straight-forward and inflexible antagonist. He could not, and at length he felt he could not, evade the payment of a sum that brought his account at the bankers to a very low ebb, and the sudden deprivation of which knocked on the head sundry schemes that he had almost nursed to maturity.

Bouverie knew his man well enough to decline signing an acquittance from all further claims upon the solicitor, until he had got the cheque cashed ; which, the bankers being close at hand, he effected in a few minutes—leaving the precious trio to indulge, in the interim, in their own reflections.

“ Now that this great business is settled,” cried Robinson, on Bouverie again entering the office, “ so much to the satisfaction of all parties, it will not be too much to request you,

Captain Bouverie, to let it go no further. It cannot be advisable that it should do so."

"Mr. Robinson," cried Bouverie, placing the money in his pocket, "it is not my wish to injure you, but I must plainly tell you, that I shall make no scruple of informing certain friends of mine, with whom you are, or have been, connected, of the whole circumstances. Doubtless, the promptness with which, when called upon, you have made reparation, will be a strong point in your favour."

"But, my good, dear sir," remonstrated Robinson, "if I promise—"

Bouverie pointed to the door of the outer office. "Do you think, sir," he said, "were I to do as you desire, the gentlemen in the other room could be induced to hold their peace?"

"Oh, my God! I am ruined past redemption," groaned Robinson: "that villain Jeffries—after all I have done for him, too!"

"I know nothing of the villany of Mr. Jeffries," said Bouverie, "or of the extent of your

kindness towards him. No, no, Mr. Robinson," and he arose — "gentlemen like you, before you do acts like these, should at least make up your mind to the possible contingency of their disclosure."

Bouverie, when he entered the outer office, found Messrs. Jeffries and Hunsman anxiously awaiting his arrival.

"I give you joy, Captain," said Jeffries, with a low bow, "you have acted your part nobly."

"Like a trump, and no mistake," added Hunsman.

"Gentlemen," said Bouverie, "if you will call upon me to-morrow morning, we will settle our little business. To-morrow morning, at eleven," he repeated with emphasis.

"Why, sir," and Jeffries coughed; an intimation to Hunsman, that his more winning and persuasive talents were to be brought into the field.

"Captain," said the orator, touching his hat, and leering from one eye seductively, "if you

could say now—perwising it's all the same to you. We wants the blunt; we do, honour! They do say," he added, archly, "to-morrow's like the tenant as mizzled—never comes."

"It's awkward, certainly, for I am in great haste," cried Bouverie, anxiously: "not that you need detain me long. Where shall we go?"

"If you would condescend," said Jeffries, overjoyed: "not a step—just round the corner—the Coach and Horses—excellent private room."

"And the best o' liquors," said Hunsman; "you can't call for nothing as isn't bang up to the mark. But, I knows you gen'lemen don't take it neat; leastways, very seldom."

Thither Bouverie followed the impatient expectants, and, as quickly as possible, placed in their hands the sum he had promised them; politely declining to take his share of a bottle of wine, which Mr. Jeffries offered "to stand Sam" for, and inwardly agreeing to the truth

of the remark insinuated into his ear by Jabez, as he took his leave, that he would find Miss Agnes Graham “as wirtuous, and, he might say, as well conducted a creature, mind you, as ever eyes were clapt on ; a young woman as knew herself, and hadn’t no wices whatsoever.”

In the meanwhile, Mr. Robinson had been left a prey to his own reflections, which, as they seldom spared anybody, were not more merciful even to himself. Rage, mortification, and fear, alternately chased each other through his breast, and were succeeded by other feelings, to which, as it falls but to the lot of few to experience them, so it has never occurred to the world to give them a name. It at last struck Mr. Robinson, that Mrs. Maxwell must have had a hand in this business. It is the fate of vice, that it can never feel secure in the employment of its agents or instruments ; and Mr. Robinson, being one of those who never kept faith with another any longer than his own

interest dictated the expediency of his so doing, naturally and reasonably concluded, that others might mete out the same measure to himself. He could not conceive but that Jeffries had been instigated to betray him by another ; and that other, could only be Mrs. Maxwell ; a conclusion greatly strengthened by the fact that Mr. Hunsman, her confidential servant, not only accompanied, but encouraged this base proceeding.

Mr. Robinson now remembered a certain bond in judgment, which Mrs. Maxwell had signed some time since — a document which gave him the power of seizing her furniture and effects ; and of this, almost in a delirium of revenge, he resolved to avail himself. It was high time, indeed, that he should close his connexion with a person who had ceased to possess power to be of service to him ; and between whom and himself, he was aware, there was but little disposition towards either friendship or esteem.

Fraught with this humane determination,

but designing to pay a preparatory visit of the exploratory kind, to see how the land lay, as he termed it, (a caution characteristic of the solicitor), he mounted the Egham stage, and was in due time set down a short distance from the mansion.

There was an unusual bustle in the hall when Mr. Robinson entered, that seemed to indicate something extraordinary. Servants were hurrying hither and thither; one door shut—two or three doors opened; a strange dog barked at the heels of two strange men, and the hall chairs and the barometer were gone.

Mr. Robinson with some difficulty succeeded in running down a footman, whom he caught firmly by the button. “What’s the matter here?” cried he: “where is Mrs. Maxwell?”

“Mrs. Maxwell’s wanted,” cried the man, breaking away.

“Who wants Mrs. Maxwell?” cried a man issuing from behind: and Robinson recognised him as the cypher who usually answered to the

name of Maxwell. That gentleman had been paying strict attention to the ale-barrel ; and invigorated by his studies, was disposed to dispense with that troublesome reserve which upon other occasions beset him. “ Oh, *you* are come, are you ? ” said he, advancing sinuously towards the solicitor ; “ you’re not wanted here just now, I can tell you ; so, you had better be packing.”

“ My dear Mr. Maxwell,” exclaimed Robinson, “ pray tell me, what is the matter ? Can I be of any service ? ”

“ You haven’t been of much service hitherto,” hiccupped Maxwell ; “ I don’t know whether you can be.”

“ Where’s the lady ? ” demanded Robinson.

“ You’d better not see the lady, as you call her,” said Maxwell ; “ there’s an execution in the house ; they’ve taken away nearly all the traps, and I don’t know whether they won’t take her after them. Let us hope the best ; ” — and the affectionate husband chuckled.

“ They couldn’t do that, Mr. Maxwell,” cried Robinson, whose professional habits caused him for a moment to forget the matter in hand ; “ they might take *you*, as I think you know.”

“ Don’t I ?” said Maxwell, scratching his wig. “ But I tell you, Robinson, as a friend, you had better not go near her just now. She read something in the paper this morning about a duel, and that upset her ; and then the execution came in, and that capsized her ; and now you are come, and that’ll bother her ; and we shall have the devil’s own rumpus. She has been pegging away at the brandy-bottle all day, and, if you say anything to put her out, she’ll show fight, I can tell you.”

“ God bless my soul !” cried Robinson, who saw at a glance the value of his bond in judgment reduced to twopence a pound—“ God bless my soul !”

“ Ah, so I say !” cried Maxwell : “ I hope he will, but I’m afraid he won’t. You needn’t call here again, old boy ; we shall leave in a few days.”

At another time, Mr. Robinson would have vindicated his own dignity, and taught the vulgar fellow, and intoxicated beast, the immeasurable distance that subsisted between them ; but, at the present moment, chagrin and disappointment were too busy within him to admit of such self-satisfying gratifications. He merely muttered, therefore, his intention of waiting upon Mrs. Maxwell shortly, and returned towards the town in a state of misery known only to gentlemen like Mr. Robinson.

Too much occupied with his own thoughts, Mr. Robinson was in no situation to remark a carriage which drove rapidly past him, containing Captain Bouverie and Agnes, and which stopped at Mr. Hopwood's door. Before the solicitor had concluded his dreary journey to town, explanations and congratulations had been exchanged between the happy parties congregated in Hopwood's parlour ; and the anticipated happiness of his daughter, connected with the full development of the blessed fruits

of his “system,” led the old gentleman into such extravagance of hilarity during the evening, that Georgina inwardly determined, never, by any froward or petulant disregard of his will, to place any obstacle in the way of his anxiously-expressed wishes ;—a determination not a little strengthened by the certainty that she could not have the man she once preferred, and by a mental review of the qualities of her intended husband, which called upon her heart to “show cause” why she ought not to have preferred Lord Walgrave.

CHAPTER XI.

“ ——— He raves, his words are loose
As heaps of sand, and scattering wide from sense.”

It was about three weeks after the duel, that Vernon awoke as from a long and hideous dream. It was with some difficulty that he recognized where he was; and he was unable, for a considerable time, to recollect anything but circumstances that occurred years ago. Gradually, however, as by a painful effort, he enforced consciousness upon himself—his mind presented before him events of more recent date—until at length it rested upon the one dreadful act, beyond which he knew nothing. He started, and cast his eyes round the room.

A gentleman was seated on the sofa, reading. Vernon gazed at him long and earnestly. Could it be?—It must be, Moore. He repeated his name weakly, but with a clear emphasis.

Moore turned round incredulously, and approached him on tiptoe.

“Vernon,” said he, “surely you spoke.”

“I did—I did—you have been a good friend to me, Moore. I begin to feel that. Tell me—where is Laurence?—what has become of him?”

Moore, overjoyed as he was at this sudden and favourable change in his friend, was embarrassed by the question.

“You shall know all in good time,” he answered; “you must compose yourself now. Do you know that you have been very ill for some weeks?”

“*Here*, was it not?” said Vernon, pointing to his head. “Yes—but I am well again now—too well. Have you attended me constantly?”

“ No—but I have called often.”

“ I thought so,” pursued Vernon ; “ there were men about me, I think ; and my sister Mary,” he added, suddenly recollecting himself, “ where is she ? She left me some time since, did she not ?”

“ She did,” said Moore ; “ and you shall see her soon. Do you feel strong enough to speak to her now ?”

“ Oh, yes.”

“ I will go and bring her then,” said Moore, too glad of an opportunity to escape from a circumstantial account of all that had taken place since they left Hampstead, and which he began to fear Vernon was about to extort from him.

Moore returned in a few minutes, leading Miss Vernon.

“ I will call again in the evening—good bye for the present, Vernon ; good morning, madam,” and he abruptly departed.

Miss Vernon walked slowly towards her brother. She was habited in deep mourning,

and her face was coldly and almost unnaturally pale. Vernon scanned her for a moment, and then averted his eyes.

“ I am glad to hear that you are better,” said his sister, with seeming calmness.

“ Oh ! I am better,” he returned, quickly ; “ I have been ill—mad, I suppose ; but I am well once more. I feel a lightness that I cannot account for ; I must not feel so. But tell me, how is Laurence ?”

Miss Vernon had taken a chair while her brother was speaking, on the back of which she was leaning with her head upon her hand. She turned her face suddenly towards him, and looked at him, as if doubting whether her ears had not deceived her.

“ You think me mad again—oh, no !” cried Vernon, with a faint smile. “ Is he not dead ?”

“ He is, Horace Vernon.”

“ I thought so—I knew it—I heard it somewhere, but where I do not know. I have yet another question, Mary. Do not answer it

in words. Your silence, if it be so, will be enough. I have dreamed, or—what was it?—something in my brain and in my heart, for a long time, that my sister Charlotte is also dead. She also is dead,” he repeated. “ You do not speak ?”

“ Oh, Horace, talk not so, for mercy’s sake,” said his sister, rising, and approaching him ; “ collect yourself—we will speak of it another time.”

“ But it is so,” said Vernon, doggedly ; “ both dead ! it is best—is it not best ?”

“ You know not how you distress me,” said his sister, appealing to him, fearful that he would relapse into madness ; “ you must not think of it now.”

“ Of what else should I think ?” said he, in surprise ; “ here is thought enough for one life, I should imagine. May I walk out ?”

“ Into the streets ? by no means,” said Miss Vernon, about to detain him.

“ Into the streets ?” said he, with a vague

laugh ; “ how could you think so ? What ! I walk the streets ! Murderers do not show themselves by daylight—they are too wise for that—no, no, that would not do.”

Miss Vernon was in deep perplexity as to what course she should pursue. Afraid to summon the keepers, lest her brother should break out into violence, and undo all the good that had hitherto been effected, she was at the same time doubtful of the prudence of leaving him to himself.

“ Will you walk in the garden ?” she said, at length ; “ it is very small, you know, but the air may do you good.”

“ Yes, that is what I meant ; I will walk there awhile.”

When Vernon again entered the room, which was at the expiration of about an hour, he appeared more composed, but observed a deep silence, which his sister did not deem it advisable to break.

After dinner, however, he called for wine,

but instantly understood the deprecating glance of Miss Vernon.

“ True, true,” he said, waving his hand, “ I must not drink wine ; it has made me mad once, and might do so again. I must take care not to go mad. Mary,” he resumed, after a pause ; “ you did not tell me where they are buried ?”

“ In Hampstead church, together,” said his sister, in a low tone.

“ I can bear that—I can bear to be told that,” cried Vernon, speaking rapidly. “ I may know, but I must never see, where those creatures lie:—that must be kept off—away from me :” and he thrust his hands from him. “ Oh, never—never—never, will I see where they are buried.”

“ You had best retire now,” urged Miss Vernon, in an almost inaudible voice ; “ you are fatigued—a short sleep will revive you.”

“ Oh, no ; not a short sleep,” cried Vernon, almost with a groan, and he clasped his head

with his hands; "I would keep awake, till I die. It is sleep I dread. I must think, or I shall go back—mad—oh! mad——"

A strong convulsion shook his frame, and he appeared to be wrestling with some inward and almost irresistible emotion. His sister watched him in agonized silence; her hands stretched out before her, as fearing that he would momentarily drop to the ground. He looked up, and beheld her.

There was an expression in his sister's face that he had never seen before. Unable, as yet, altogether to comprehend that he was the cause of it, its piteous, heavenly tenderness was more than he could withstand. He arose and came towards her, and falling upon his knees, held up his hands beseechingly—"Oh! Mary Vernon! my sister, my only sister!"

Feelings, however we may succeed in repressing them for a time, will eventually wreak themselves upon us with an additional force and strength, which they derive from being so

long pent in the bosom ; or, if it be not literally true that they do so, it is certain that circumstances will arise, when the long-studied and almost habitual exterior of apathy is forgotten, and Nature resumes her functions. It was so with Miss Vernon ; who, whether from a morbid policy, or a mistaken pride, had for many years striven to conceal and to stifle feelings which, intense in their nature, often, when imprisoned in the breast, destroy

“ More than are number'd in the lists of Fate.”

But, schooled as she was in this most difficult species of self-denial, the sight of her brother, humbly, abjectly, at her feet, was more than she could bear. Her chest heaved—her hands were clenched together with a convulsive effort—a violent spasm arose in her throat, and, with a loud and piercing shriek, she fell senseless on the floor.

Vernon, as he knelt, gazed at her awhile in silent stupefaction. “ What have I done ? I have killed her also,” he murmured. “ What

has brought you here ?” he continued, starting to his feet, as two men burst into the room, and he stood before them, as though to intercept their progress.

“ Keep off !” said he, wildly. “ Stand back ! I have killed her—I shall murder you. You shall not touch her : send up the women !”

At this moment, the landlady and two female servants, who had followed the men into the room, came forward, and raising Miss Vernon from the ground, conveyed her to her own apartment.

The first definite idea which had entered the brain of Vernon, when he emerged from the delirium in which, during the last three weeks, he had been plunged, was, that it was impossible he could be suffered to live ; that it had been ordained that he must surely die ; and that death, and the eternal rest which he believed awaited it, was the only blessing that now remained to him. It is doubtless, a direction of Providence, that no calamity, however

great, can befall us, that the Almighty does not, in most cases, furnish us with some means of assuaging; and they who nominally deny the existence of an over-ruling Providence, are at all times ready to embrace the doctrine of an inexorable Fate—an unstable and uncomfortable doctrine, certainly, but one that is exceedingly convenient and agreeable to its adherents, who are thereby steeled against, and shielded from, the consequences of their own actions.

The state of half-consciousness in which Vernon had lain for some weeks, had deadened the shock which the tidings of Laurence's and his sister's death would otherwise have caused—a shock which might have lost him his reason for ever; and at this moment his bewildered faculties enabled him to view himself merely as an instrument, in the hands of fate, by whom it had been pre-determined that his whole family must be destroyed. He awaited, accordingly, almost with calmness, the intel-

ligence of his sister's death, which he expected every moment to be brought to him.

Miss Vernon, however, when the first paroxysm had subsided, became more calm and collected ; summoned her resolution to her aid ; and, in a short time, returned to the room in which Vernon was seated, apparently as serene and tranquil as before.

Vernon beheld her with surprise. He arose to meet her. " Is it possible, Mary ?" he said. " I thought—"

His sister took his hand. " You must suffer yourself to be ruled by me, Horace," she said. " You are, as yet, far from well. You must not think, now. Oh, my brother, never kneel again to me. There is One, to whom alone your prayers are due, and to Him you must not yet pray."

" To whom ?" said Vernon, inquiringly. " Oh, I know, I know, Mary. You know I cannot pray to Him. Must not—must *not*. Never mention *that* more," and he turned

away with a shudder. He came towards her again suddenly. "I have been mad," said he: "I am aware of it. I guess who those two men were, who rushed into the room some time since. Promise me this—that you will dismiss them."

"I will do so," answered his sister.

"That is well—that is excellent—I want their hideous services no longer. They would make me mad. Let them go back to Hampstead. I wish Moore would come. Oh, this brain of mine—it will wander!"

His sister was alarmed. "My dear Horace!" she began—

"No—no—it shall not. It is right again. I have but to think of one thing—that settles—fixes it."

The entrance of Moore soon after, considerably relieved Miss Vernon.

"I do not know whether I was right, madam," said Moore, "but I have brought a visitor to your brother. He would take no

denial, and, I believe, has something private and particular to impart to him."

"I fear sir," replied Miss Vernon in a suppressed tone, "that my brother is hardly yet in a condition to see any body; more especially if any excitement is likely to be the consequence. Is he an intimate friend?"

"Why, no," said Moore, "he is not, and yet his lordship was so pressing, being about to leave England for the continent, that I could not well decline bringing him."

"Of whom are you speaking?" said Vernon, approaching; "somebody wishing to see me, I think, you said—who can he be? a friend of course; friends are always so attentive when a man's in distress."

"Lord Walgrave," said Moore whispering; "you remember Lord Walgrave, surely."

"I do so," cried Vernon, shaking his head, in a manner that, upon another occasion, might have been deemed comic; "I think I have reason to do so. What! he's below, is he?"

Has he brought a pack in his pocket? Well, have at him, I say."

"By no means," cried Miss Vernon, interfering.

"I didn't mean it; I didn't mean it, you foolish woman," said Vernon lightly; "I have done with fortune—she may keep her wheel to herself, or turn it for others; I have done with her."

"My dear madam," said Moore, "I really believe his lordship has something of consequence to say to your brother—nothing of that kind, I'll be sworn. I will take care," he added lowering his voice; "that he shall not be excited. Will you come, Vernon?"

"May I?" said Vernon turning to his sister, "I will be very calm. Come along, and let us hear what this lord has to say."

"Now don't fluster yourself, my dear friend," said Moore, as they descended the stairs;—"Walgrave is not the bad fellow you take him for."

“ Lord bless you, Moore,” cried Vernon ; “ I don’t take him for a bad fellow—all right—a man of the world—fine person—elegant manners—so forth.”

“ Lord Walgrave arose to meet them. There was an unaccustomed gravity in his demeanour and manners, as he extended his hand to Vernon—which the other, after a moment’s delay, accepted; and it was almost with embarrassment that he apologized for troubling Vernon with his present visit, and uttered the ordinary regrets and sorrow common to such occasions.

A long silence ensued after the gentlemen had seated themselves ; Lord Walgrave was the first to break it.

“ Moore,” said he, “ you would do me a particular favour by withdrawing for a few minutes ; I would rather, I confess, speak with Mr. Vernon alone.”

“ Would you ?” said Moore ; but he did not

attempt to stir. "The fact is, Walgrave, I have given my word to Miss Vernon, that I would be present. You know," and he glanced at Walgrave, "he is yet rather unwell—nervous, and easily excited, and—"

"I cannot conceive, my lord," interrupted Vernon, in a tone perfectly free from the wildness which had before characterized it—"I cannot conceive what business you can possibly have with me, that Moore may not hear."

"It is merely a matter of feeling, and of my own feelings," said Walgrave confused; "I would rather—but you are a gentleman, and a man of honour, Mr. Moore."

"My friends consider me so, and I am entirely of their opinion," said Moore.

"I hope to be included amongst them," said Walgrave. "Mr. Vernon, you no doubt remember the occasion on which I had the pleasure once of meeting you."

"I do," said Vernon, with some asperity;

“the *pleasure* of meeting me ! I believe the pleasure was entirely on one side, my lord.”

Lord Walgrave coloured, but observing a significant glance that proceeded from Moore, he resumed.

“I think, sir,” he said, addressing Moore, “you will agree with me, that a man, having acquired certain vices, is not bound to keep them during his whole life.”

“He is by no means bound to do so,” answered Moore ; “and I believe very few keep them on compulsion.”

“True,” replied Lord Walgrave, smiling faintly. “Mr. Vernon, you recollect that, upon that evening, I won from you a considerable, a *very* considerable sum of money.”

Vernon arose hastily, and his eyes glared at the other wildly. He checked himself. “*I will* control myself,” he said, and he reseated himself. “I do not understand your drift, sir. You did win money of me ; was it paid ?”

“Pardon me, Vernon,” cried Walgrave

earnestly ; “ I came not here to offend you. It *was* paid, and honourably. I can hardly explain,” he added, with some reluctance. “ Mr. Moore, I beseech *you*, at least, to enter into my feelings, when I say, I cannot reconcile it to them *now*, to retain more than a portion of that money. Do you understand me ?”

“ Confound me if I shall speak truth if I say I do,” answered Moore.

“ It is humiliating—very humiliating,” said Walgrave ; “ I know it ; but I have no alternative. Here, Mr. Vernon,” and he handed him a packet, “ I return you ten thousand pounds ; you will find that sum there. I should have returned it before, but was unable to do so.”

Vernon burst forth into vociferous laughter. “ Moore,” he cried, “ you know that I have been mad—yes, I have been mad, Lord Walgrave—but upon my soul, there are two of us—ha ! ha ! I shan’t take it,” he continued gravely.

Walgrave was about to make an appeal to

Moore. "I do understand you now," said the latter. Walgrave cast his eyes to the ground; whilst Moore caught his hand, and shook it warmly.

"I hope, Moore," cried his lordship, "you will prevail upon your friend——"

"I will," replied Moore. "Vernon,—our friend Lord Walgrave feels that it will be a satisfaction to himself to return you this money. You will do him a great favour by your acceptance of it: you will unhandsomely—I mean, ungraciously reject his friendship, by your not instantly placing it in your pocket-book."

"Thank you, thank you," said Walgrave, affected, "you have expressed my feelings exactly. Come, Mr. Vernon," and he came towards him, and pressed the packet into his hand, and continued in a subdued voice, "let me regain your good opinion—let me *deserve* to regain it. I will never again forfeit it, I promise you."

Vernon ruminated for a time with the packet in his hand. "By the bye," he said, at length, "what a most extraordinary circumstance it is, that I should never have thought of that woman! You spoke of her some time ago, I think—referred to her rather. Is she still living?"

"Of whom do you speak?" inquired Walgrave.

"Of Mrs. Maxwell, to be sure. What has become of her?"

"I have not seen her for some time," answered Walgrave. "She is, I suspect, not so prosperous as——"

"Her friends could desire, as people say," interrupted Vernon; "and yet these persons bid high for fortune, too."

"Hang her! she's not worth talking about," said Moore rising.

"True," said Walgrave; "nor worth thinking about, either."

"And yet we frequently talk a great deal of

those we do not care to think about," remarked Vernon.

"Good!" said Moore, motioning to Walgrave to retire. "You see, our friend Vernon is mending apace."

"I am, indeed, very happy to perceive it," said Walgrave, and he extended his hand; "God bless you, Mr. Vernon."

"Well; and you," replied Vernon; "I shall see you again, Moore," and he retired abruptly.

"What do you think?" said he, addressing his sister, as he entered the room, and producing the packet. "Lord Walgrave has returned me ten thousand pounds; I would not have taken it, but that—" he hesitated.

"We heard of it at the time," said Miss Vernon. "I am rejoiced, however—"

"*We* heard of it—ha! I recollect. Now Mary, I am going to do an act of justice. Part of this money belongs to another—the remainder is for you. I must see to that quickly. What a

pity they had not lived, eh? I would have done something yet."

"What do you mean, Horace?" said his sister.

"My God! I was forgetting myself again." exclaimed Vernon. "I won't think in that direction. Ha! Moore, I want you," he continued, as that gentleman opened the door. "Could you learn for me where Livingstone is?"

"Sit down, and compose yourself," cried Moore; "what do you want with Livingstone? You can have no business with him, I'm sure."

"Oh! but I have," said Vernon; "I want Livingstone; I must see Livingstone, and that, directly."

"Won't a letter do as well?" inquired Miss Vernon.

He appeared to reflect for a few minutes. "Yes, a letter would do; I could send to him, eh, Moore?"

"Much better;" said Moore; "at present

you must not see many people. Indeed, you could not see Livingstone, without going to him. I heard the other day, he was in the Fleet."

"In the Fleet!" cried Vernon, starting; "And what's become of—his wife, I mean; where is she?"

"Upon my word, I can't say," replied Moore; "with her friends, most likely." He drew out his watch; "I must go," said he, "I leave town to-night, till Monday."

"Will you call on Monday? you will see me then;" said Vernon, taking his hand. "Behold, Mary," and he put his sister's hand into that of Moore; "the best, the only friend I have in the world. I have none other such in the wide world. Reflect upon that; think upon it—I know you will."

"I am fully and deeply sensible of the value of Mr. Moore's friendship," said Miss Vernon.

"Oh! my dear madam, say no more, I im-

plore you," cried Moore, in a deprecating tone ;
"Vernon will make me do what I have not
done for twenty years—blush. I shall find
you still better, when I call on Monday, I
hope."

"Better ! oh ! how much better !" said Vernon with a sigh.

"Business, business ;—I must attend to that now," cried Vernon, when Moore was gone.

"To-morrow will do for that," remonstrated his sister ; "you had better retire to rest now. I had forgotten : to-morrow will be Sunday."

"Aye, and so it will be," said Vernon. "Tonight, then," and he drew out his pocket-book ; "I shall sleep the better for it. Oh ! my sister ! if I had not neglected so many things, I need not dread sleep, as I now do. You know not what dreams I have had ; worse than the truth—worse than reality—worse than death !"

CHAPTER XII.

“ He is gone, indeed.

The wonder is he hath endur'd so long :

He but usurp'd his life.”——

THE state of almost sullen abstraction in which Vernon was plunged during the forenoon of the following day, caused his sister to apprehend that he was about to subside into incurable and hopeless insanity. He, however, threw it off during the afternoon ; spoke collectedly and with cheerfulness upon indifferent topics ; studiously avoiding—a caution which Miss Vernon also observed—any reference to more painful and dangerous subjects. So beguiled, indeed, was his sister by these indications of amendment, that she instantly and without suspicion acceded

to his request, that she would leave him for half an hour ; his plea being that he was fatigued, and that a short sleep on the sofa would revive him.

No sooner, however, had she retired to her own room, than Vernon stealthily stepped into the passage, possessed himself of his hat and cane, and opening the street-door cautiously, issued forth, running down the street with all the timorous speed of a truant school-boy.

Weakness soon compelled him to abate his pace ; but still, as quickly as he was able, and with a strong effort to divert his mind from all outward impressions, he hastened on until he arrived at the gate of the Fleet Prison. Inquiring of the turnkey where Livingstone was to be found, he was referred to No. 11 in the second gallery, whither he proceeded ; and knocking at the door, was requested simultaneously by three gruff voices, to “ walk in”—a ceremony which was facilitated by the opening of the door on the part of one of the speakers.

“ Is Mr. Livingstone here ?” demanded Vernon.

“ I can’t say as he is, sir,” answered the man, eyeing the interrogator with familiar curiosity ; “ but I’ll go fetch him, if you like.”

“ Will you do me the favour ?”

“ Sure,” said the other. “ You’re a friend, I hope, as is come to serve him. I’m sure I pity him, poor fellow ! He’s an upright man, that’s what I calls him ;” and having concluded this short but fervent out-burst of sympathy, which one prisoner is invariably found to extend to another, this benevolent individual requested Mr. Scholefield and Mr. Dixon, with easy politeness, to “ walk their chalks” into the coffee-room, “ seeing as how the gentleman might desire a colloquial conversation with Mr. Livingstone.” This request the parties appealed to promptly obeyed, but in a very different spirit ; Mr. Scholefield having inwardly satisfied himself that Vernon was a voluntary and benignant bail ; whilst Mr. Dixon, on the

other hand, would be upon his oath, and betted his companion, as they descended the stone steps, a pot of half-and-half upon the fact, that he was nothing more nor less than the detaining creditor.

The man returned in a few minutes, bringing Livingstone with him. "Here he is, sir," said he, "and no mistake. I think I've brought the right 'un. Quite correct, I believe?"

"Bless my soul, Mr. Vernon," cried Livingstone, in astonishment.

Vernon knew the voice—the only thing appertaining to his former friend that could easily be recognized; Livingstone being clad in an old dressing gown and slippers, and having a fur cap on his head, a cigar in his mouth, and a three weeks' beard upon his chin.

"Shall I fetch anything up, *now*, sir?" said the man, lingering at the door.

"Nothing, Snuggs, at present," said Livingstone. "By the bye, will you take something, Vernon?"

“Nothing,” said Vernon laconically.

Snuggs retired with no slight inward displeasure, betaking himself to his friends, to compare notes touching the close-fisted screw in No. 11.

“I should hardly have known you, Livingstone,” said Vernon: “you are much altered of late.”

“And you too,” said Livingstone; “but somebody told me you had been ill. An unfortunate business that—”

“Livingstone,” cried Vernon starting up—“how dare you—but no—not a word about that—I must not—I will not—silence!”

“I beg pardon,” said Livingstone; “I was not aware—”

“Of what?” demanded Vernon.

“I mean, I did not intend—but who thought of seeing you, my dear sir? I am sure this is an unexpected pleasure—a favour, I may call it.”

“Don’t call it so, for it is not,” said Vernon.

“ I want to see your wife, Livingstone. Where is she?—in town ?”

Livingstone ventured an exploring, but timid glance at his companion, and hazarded an agreeable smile.

“ Is your business with Mrs. Livingstone of a very particular nature ?” said he, “ for, unless it be, I fear I can hardly secure you so cordial a reception as—but, you know you were always a favourite in that quarter. I hardly know what to say—”

“ Then the sooner you cease talking, the better,” said Vernon shortly. “ My business is very particular:—is that enough ?”

“ You must recollect,” said Livingstone, with more confidence, “ that you borrowed a considerable sum of my wife, which I am sure she lent you, not only without hesitation, but with pleasure. Now, since you deceived her in the repayment—” he paused, but Vernon was not disposed to interrupt him ; “ since you so grossly deceived her—”

“It is time that I should undeceive you,” cried Vernon, with a look of disgust. “My object in wishing to see her, is to repay the money I borrowed—and with interest; and since my time is precious, if you do not choose to inform me where I may see her, I shall forward the money to her trustees.”

Livingstone was unfeignedly surprised at this intimation. He sprang from his chair and approached Vernon, and taking him warmly by the hand, began to shake it most cordially. “My dear friend,” he exclaimed, “why had you not said this at first, and spared me the utterance of anything that might hurt your feelings. God knows, I am the last man in the world to do so. If you could but know what I have felt on your account, since I heard of your misfortunes.”

“If I did know, I should hardly believe it, I dare say,” answered Vernon. “The time is past, Livingstone, for compliments on either side. I have but little time to spare, and must see Mrs. Livingstone immediately, if you please.”

Livingstone, during this speech, had been laying the first stone of a castle in the air, out of the materials which Vernon had so unexpectedly furnished.

“See her ! my dear sir,” cried he ; “and so you shall. You will find her in a very wretched lodging. Times are changed with us also, as you may easily conceive. But why—” he added, as if recollecting himself—“why need you see her at all ? Surely, you can entrust it into my hands ; the husband, you know is—”

“Not competent to sign a receipt for the payment of his wife’s money. Oh, no, Livingstone—that won’t do, that won’t do.”

The other eyed him in extreme doubt and perplexity. There was an expression in his eye which Livingstone had never before remarked—a wildness that formed an inexplicable contrast to the calm delivery of his words. Livingstone, to use the common phrase, was quite “taken aback ;” but his interest, to which he was ever

attending, but which he never could be said to study, pointed out to him the prudence of keeping this God-send snug, if possible.

“My old friend, Vernon,” said he, in a tone of former days, “I have been treated most harshly by my creditors—cheated through thick and thin by them, I assure you. Now, there is no occasion, none whatever, why they should know anything about this money.”

“It is no business of mine to speak about it,” answered Vernon; “all I want is, an acknowledgment from Mrs. Livingstone of the receipt of it.”

“Excellent,” cried Livingstone; “and that she will cheerfully give you. Do you know, Vernon, that this loan to you, as it turns out, was a most providential circumstance?”

“None of your cant,” cried Vernon, rising; “give me your wife’s address, and let me go.”

“Oh! but it was,” exclaimed Livingstone earnestly, laying his hand on his arm. “Why, one of the trustees died about a month ago, in-

solvent ; and the other has been gone to America these three weeks. I wish," he added with a sigh, " I had followed him."

"What use in that," exclaimed Vernon. "You could'nt make him refund. Ha ! ha ! this is good—capital ! what a d——d' world it is ! Come, where does your wife live ? Let me be off, for God's sake."

"I don't mean that I wanted to make him refund—far from it," cried Livingstone, flinging the end of his cigar from him ; "far from it."

"You are, indeed—" said Vernon bitterly. "Here is a pencil :—now, dispatch."

"Ha ! very good," cried Livingstone ;—"sharp as ever, Vernon," and he took the pencil, and scribbled his wife's address—which was in a contiguous court. "I mean, that I wish I had followed his example. It won't do to be left in the lurch, will it ? Besides, the thing's so often done, of late. D—— it, it's growing quite genteel."

"But now," he resumed, when Vernon was

about to depart, "pray do me the favour to tell Mrs. Livingstone that I wish to see her, as soon as possible; and don't let this matter escape you. Will you promise me? Those creditors of mine are sharks, perfect sharks; and if I can but pass the Court before they know anything about this money, I can snap my fingers at them."

Vernon gave the necessary promise, and made the best of his way to the lodging of Mrs. Livingstone, which he discovered to be quite as miserable a place as Livingstone, when he took leave of him at the gate, assured him he would find it.

Vernon caused the ancient knocker of the crazy door to perform, for the first time during its existence, the flourish of a double knock. A kind of scramble, succeeded by a whispering in the passage, ensued; and presently a middle-aged woman made her appearance.

"I want Mrs. Livingstone," said Vernon;
"I come from her husband."

“ Mrs. Livingstone ! here—you’re wanted,” screamed the woman, following her own voice, at the same time, into a back room.

Mrs. Livingstone at length emerged from an heterogeneous apartment of faded finery. “ Mrs. Mangles,” said she, “ be so kind as to light my candle. Thank you ;” and as she approached the door with the flaming candle in her hand, it was too evident that she had been participating with her friend Mrs. Mangles in a cordial.

She started back in unaffected astonishment.

Mr. Vernon—I declare !” she cried in a high key ; “ can I believe the evidence of my eyes ?” —a doubt, by the bye, which she might reasonably entertain. “ How kind this is of you, dear Mr. Vernon, to come and see us in our distresses. We have been sadly put about. For my part, I wonder it has not laid me on a bed of sickness. And you, too,—but pray walk up stairs to my little room. I am really ashamed to ask you,” and she shrugged her

shoulders, and lowered her voice, "into such a hole. But Mrs. Mangles is such a good soul!"

Vernon followed her upstairs in silence, and entering the hole in question, seated himself in a rush-bottomed chair, and produced his pocket-book.

Livingstone was wrong when he foretold for his friend the chance of a cool reception from his wife. Mrs. Livingstone was not what is called a bad-natured woman, for a very sufficient reason—she had long ago ceased to possess any nature at all. It is true, when she heard she would in all probability lose the entire sum she had entrusted to Vernon, she thought it a hard case, and "wondered how men could act in that way;" but the shortly subsequent insolvency and death of one of her trustees, and the flight to America of the other, had quite reconciled her to Vernon's conduct. In truth, if Mrs. Livingstone cared a rush for any human being in the world, Vernon was that person. That she had jilted one of the first bankers in

London, was a source of honest pride to her ; and she felt grateful to Vernon for having given her the opportunity of magnifying her consequence thereby ; an opportunity of which she did not fail to take advantage ; as Mrs. Mangles, who had planted herself on the stairs, for eaves-dropping purposes, might have testified. In a word, the poor *lady* was entirely destitute of mind—a mere creature of circumstances—formed and controlled by them ; with no feeling but vanity, if vanity be a feeling ; and who did not accommodate herself, but was accommodated, to any station of life in which it might please fortune to place her ; as much at home, and perhaps more so, with the old woman on the staircase, as with the first lady in the first circles.

It happened, fortunately for Mrs. Livingstone's interest, that just as Vernon was about to enter upon the business which had brought him to see her, Mrs. Mangles, unable to retain her equilibrium, rolled down stairs, and retired in confusion to her own room ; whilst Mrs. Living

stone, having coolly remarked upon the curious nature of some people, and added, in a whisper, that her landlady was too partial to gin and Mr. Livingstone, prepared to give ear to Vernon's communication.

It was not merely astonishment that possessed her, when Vernon, in few words, made known the cause of his visit, and of his previous call upon Livingstone, with all that had been said by that gentleman;—it was inconceivable to Mrs. Livingstone, that any man could be found to return money, unless it were his interest to do so—unless, in other words, he would lose more, in the estimation of the world, by keeping the money, than it was worth. Still more unaccountable to her was the fact, that Vernon should return it after the obloquy of “swindling her out of it”—which Livingstone had taken pains to promulgate—was incurred. Her wonder was, if possible, still further increased, when she found that Livingstone had not made stronger endeavours to possess himself of the

money—of which she now suddenly resolved he should never touch a penny.

Mrs. Livingstone would have been affected by what she termed, and, indeed, considered, the romantic generosity of Vernon, but that the sum itself, so large and so unexpected, operated as a set-off against any feeling of that nature. She, however, strenuously wiped her eyes as she received the small parcel; and ejected a very passable sigh, as she signed a receipt for its contents,—which she placed into her pocket with a degree of care, plainly evincing that good cause must be shown before any portion of it would find its way out again.

“ Oh, Mr. Vernon !” she said, “ my boys—my little ones, must thank you for this—on their knees they must. Do let me bring them from the next room—they are not asleep, I dare say.”

“ For heaven’s sake, no, madam,” cried Vernon. “ I would not for the world. I am happy the sum comes at an acceptable period.

Be assured, it was always my intention to repay it."

"We were always so certain of that," returned Mrs. Livingstone, "Oh, Horace!—I beg pardon—I did not mean that—Mr. Vernon, had I known your noble nature some years since—what I might have been!—I might have been a happy woman!—But, pray, forgive me."

"Ha! ha! ha!" and Vernon laughed loudly. "Forgive you!—to be sure I will—for not marrying me. I do—I do, woman," he continued, rising, and drawing the panic-stricken Mrs. Livingstone towards him. "Do you know to whom you are talking?—to a bankrupt!—to a villain!—to a murderer!—to a madman!—Do you know that?—"

"For heaven's sake, do not frighten me so!" cried Mrs. Livingstone, excessively alarmed. "Surely, I have not offended you?"

Vernon loosened his hold of her arm, but said nothing, and sat down.

“What have I been saying?” he exclaimed suddenly, after a pause. “You look pale, madam—have I alarmed you?”

“Indeed you did,” answered Mrs. Livingstone; “but you are better now. Oh, Mr. Vernon! I am sure you would pity me, if you knew all I am compelled to suffer.”

“We are all compelled to suffer,” remarked Vernon, thoughtfully.

“Ah!” resumed Mrs. Livingstone, “but he has been such a shocking man to me—and I am told he has quite lost his character with the world.”

“Indeed!” said Vernon; “but the world judges harshly sometimes.”

“Not in his case, I fear,” said she, with a sigh. “Do you know, sir, were I to let him have this money, he would desert me and his children instantly—I know he would. He has told me so, often.”

“But who ever believed Livingstone?” said Vernon, quickly. “Yes, I did—and so did you.”

“To my sorrow,” cried Mrs. Livingstone; “and in this instance I believe him, also.”

“By the bye,” cried Vernon, suddenly, “he told me he wished to see you immediately.”

“He shall never see me more, Mr. Vernon,” said the lady, placing her hand in her pocket. “There are his children in the next room. He must keep them himself. I have done with him—I have. But, are you going, Mr. Vernon?”

“I am,” replied Vernon, turning on his heel. “Good night, madam.”

“God bless you, sir!” said Mrs. Livingstone, fervently, as he descended. “Mind the stairs—God bless you!—the latch pulls back—that’s it—God bless you!”

Vernon rushed out of the court with precipitation. “And a creature like this,” said he, gazing down Farringdon-street, “was able to blight my youth, and to destroy my manhood—and the wretch I left yonder, was a friend—my friend—the friend of Horace Vernon in his

senses ! Who would not go mad, to escape such friends ? Thank God ! I have done with them, and with the world in which they abound. But what am I," he continued, as he hurried along, " that I should set myself up for a censor of others ?—I, who am the basest, the most pernicious villain that ever sought to forget his own crimes, by remembering the vices of others ?—There—over there——" and he pointed towards the north, " are two who could convict me—but they are dead—yes, they are dead,—and I live."

Muttering incoherently, he reached his own door. His sister, hearing his knock, had flown into the passage, and received him, as he entered, with an agitation which, at the moment, surprised him.

" Where have you been, Horace ?" she inquired, as she wiped his forehead with her handkerchief. " You have dreadfully alarmed me. You must never go out again without my permission."

“ I will go out no more,” he said, seating himself. “ I have accomplished an act,—not to have done which, preyed upon my mind. It is done. I have repaid Mrs. Livingstone the money I borrowed of her—at a time when it was much wanted. I remember that she lent it to me. It is now paid.”

“ You have seen Mrs. Livingstone, then?” inquired Miss Vernon.

“ Such wretches—both,” said Vernon, covering his face with his hands, and shuddering. “ God permits such to live. There are human reptiles, Mary Vernon.”

“ Do not talk so,” said his sister, soothingly.

“ How?” he inquired, in surprise. “ You do not know much of the world.”

“ But little, indeed.”

“ Know less, and avoid the Livingstones,” said he; “ they are cold, heartless, soulless. But I have a soul. Have I not a soul?”

“ You have, my dearest brother,” she answered earnestly.

“ But not to be saved—not saved. What have you been reading there?”

“ A book, which you must read shortly. You will find comfort—consolation in it.”

“ The Bible?” said Vernon. “ No—I shall not. *They* are dead!”

Miss Vernon gazed at him in mournful silence.

“ They are dead!” he repeated. “ Will that restore them to life? You do not speak—then why do you tell me of comfort, and of consolation? It is for you, Mary, to read that book—not for me—not for me.”

Miss Vernon, knowing how futile it was to attempt to reason with him in a mood like this, resumed her reading, whence she ever and anon stole a glance towards him. He remained wrapt in gloomy silence for a considerable time, when he suddenly started up.

“ I will go now,” he said, seizing a candle.

“ Where?—where will you go?” inquired his sister, following him.

“Where?” he echoed vaguely; “why, to bed, to be sure. I cannot stay here.”

He looked into his sister’s face, as she clung around him. It was full of pity and love, and mournful tenderness. He clasped her once closely to his bosom, and burst into a passion of weeping, so prolonged, so agonizing, as to shake his entire frame with a hideous convulsion.

“It is here!” he exclaimed, interpreting her look; “here!” and he struck his heart with his hand: “the anguish here, Mary—it *is* anguish. Never—never will it go from me—from my soul.”

“You will be better now,” said Miss Vernon, endeavouring to lead him to a seat.

“Yes, I shall be better,” said he, hastily. “This was foolish—it was weakness.”

“Out of such weakness proceeds the best strength, my dear Horace,” said Miss Vernon, who began to entertain hopes that nature, once relieved of the burden which oppressed it, would

permit his reason to recover its strength. "You must not check such weakness, as you call it."

"I will not," he answered: "but men must do these things alone. Pray for me to-night, Mary. You will, I know."

"You are quite composed again?"

"Quite—quite—much composed," he said, "Good night." He pressed his sister's hand fervently, and left the room.

He returned in a few minutes. He was very pale, but his face was perfectly calm and serene.

"Mary," said he, "I have not given you a kiss for many years;" and he kissed her forehead. "Oh! pray for me to-night. If I might pray to God, I would pray to him to bless you, Mary Vernon. Good night!—once more, good night!"

It was late when Miss Vernon retired to rest. She passed the door of her brother's

room, as she proceeded to her own chamber. She listened for a moment—all was silent. “He will sleep well to-night,” she whispered; “and will be much better to-morrow.”

Miss Vernon entered the breakfast-parlour at her usual hour the next morning. Her brother was not there. This caused no surprise; for he never rose early. She had waited a considerable time, when she started suddenly, and turned dreadfully pale. She remembered his words of the preceding night. She flew up stairs, and knocked loudly at the door. There was no answer. Again—and a third time—but no voice replied to her. Opening the door, she rushed, by a kind of instinct, to the dressing-table. An open sheet of paper lay upon it. A few incoherent sentences had been written, and they were addressed to herself.

She fell upon her knees, and prayed,—not long, but earnestly and deeply,—and arising, walked slowly, and with her hands clasped, to the foot of the bed.

His face was quite tranquil—immoveable. One hand was stretched upon the counterpane of the bed, and by its side lay a small phial. Horace Vernon was no more!

To deduce a satisfactory moral from the events of the preceding history, were by no means an easy task ; at the same time, we are strongly of opinion, that a very sufficient one may be drawn from them, if the reader chooses to take the trouble of finding it out. We confess, we are glad that it is no longer the fashion amongst authors—because it is no longer countenanced by the public—to work out some trite common-place, which is dignified by the name of Moral ; a requisition—for so it formerly was—which at once precludes the author from offering the true circumstances of a history, and debars him from presenting a character in its

true light. Vice does not always meet its due punishment ; nor is virtue always, if often, triumphant.

It happens, however, fortunately for us, that the chief persons in our history have had partial justice done to them severally, or are in a fair way of having it dealt out to them ; as a glance at their present position and prospects, which it is necessary to bestow at parting, will sufficiently prove.

In a few months after Lord Walgrave's expected visit to Mr. Hopwood, he led to the altar (we choose to employ the newspaper phrase, because the affair was blazoned at some length in those indispensable channels), Miss Georgina Hopwood ; upon which occasion the happy couple were accompanied by another equally happy pair—to wit, Captain Bouverie and Miss Agnes Graham, who, at the same time, underwent the same ceremony. Report whispers, that no perceptible change in their felicity is, as yet, apparent.

Mr. and Mrs. Hopwood still occupy their pleasant house at Egham : the former loses no opportunity of congratulating himself, and lecturing his friends, upon the practically exemplified virtues of “the system :” whilst Mrs. Hopwood, reconciled to the loss of her daughter, by the conviction that she has married well and happily, divides her time equally between her store-room and her drawing-room, as before. Lately, however, she has devoted a great portion of her time to the manufacture of articles of extremely fine needle-work ; and was overheard, the other day, to express her hope and trust, that “Georgina would get safe over it”—a mysterious speech, which we leave it to the reader to expound.

Major Caisson, on his way to the office of the commander-in-chief, with a plan in his pocket, which, it was his firm belief, would have been gratefully and instantaneously adopted by his Excellency, was seized with a fit of apoplexy, and died before he could offer such verbal ex-

planation of his plan, as would alone have rendered it intelligible.

Mrs. Maxwell, deserted by her former friends, and unable longer to maintain that station in society without which, however equivocal it might be, existence became unendurable, was fain, at length, to accept an annuity from Captain Bouverie; soon after which she applied so assiduously to the brandy-bottle, that she brought on a brain-fever, and after lingering in a mad-house for some months, expired.

Mr. Robinson, undaunted by former ill-success, pursued his course with unabated rapacity and vigour; but having been convicted of conniving at the forgery of a will, he was, much against *his own* will, compelled to visit a portion of the world with which he was, hitherto, unacquainted; and where, it was the eminent judge's opinion, he should remain for the rest of his life.

Mr. Moore was recently returned to Parliament for a considerable borough. He is un-

connected with party, and *will* speak his mind ; and being as incorruptible as Andrew Marvell, it is not believed he will ever get into place. He thinks, if they would but let him have his own way, he could set everything to rights in a very short time ; and complains equally of Whigs, Tories, and Radicals.

Messrs. Jeffries and Hunsman have been long engaged in a snug partnership transaction ; in the carrying on of which, the legal knowledge of the one, and the business habits of the other, are of equal service and value. By a reference to acts of Parliament, the liabilities of incurring penalties on the part of licensed victuallers, omnibus drivers, and others, are legally set forth ; and it is the business of Mr. Hunsman to “ pull up ” such thoughtless, wanton, or audacious individuals as offend against the law “ in such cases made and provided ;”—a business which Mr. Hunsman transacts with a genial earnestness that displays his fitness for the office.

Mr. Jeffries, however, prompted by a sense of the duty he owes to himself and family, manages, in addition, a small professional business of his own in the Insolvent Court; the only serious objection to which is, that it renders him peculiarly liable to colds. The pumps, in our metropolitan prisons, he considers greatly injurious to his health.

Shortly after his emancipation from the Fleet, Mr. Livingstone succeeded in discovering the retreat of his wife, who had withdrawn herself quietly from her contiguous lodging, with a determination of enjoying her own property in her own way. She was weak, or amiable, enough, to permit herself to be prevailed upon to return to his protection, and to entrust her money in Mr. Livingstone's hands, which were at that moment full of business, that must inevitably secure a large fortune in "no time." The large fortune, however, literally came in *no time*; and Mr. Livingstone now holds, per-

haps, the largest quantity of the least value of joint-stock shares, of any man in the kingdom. He may be seen in Bartholomew-lane daily, looking anxiously at the Share List, and hoping that some of them may soon arrive at par, preparatory to their rising to a premium; and he returns home every evening to a small house in the Ball's Pond-road, and partakes of a late dinner, which has the merit of being a supper, also. It is remarkable that, when the landlord makes a call, he seldom leaves the house in very high spirits; and the tax-gatherer is not entitled to that name when he waits upon Mr. Livingstone.

In conclusion, Miss Vernon, after much solicitation, was induced to give her hand to a nobleman who had been left a widower with a young family, and who had heretofore led a very dissipated life. His recent amendment is justly and generally (the words do not often meet) attributed to the influence of the lady,

whose care and affection for the children, might go far to remove the stigma which, whether with reason or otherwise we know not, has been almost universally attached to step-mothers.

THE END

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